

~ A ~
LATIN-QUARTER
COURTSHIP

~ HENRY ~
HARLAND





A LATIN-QUARTER COURTSHIP

A
Latin-Quarter Courtship

AND OTHER STORIES

BY
HENRY HARLAND

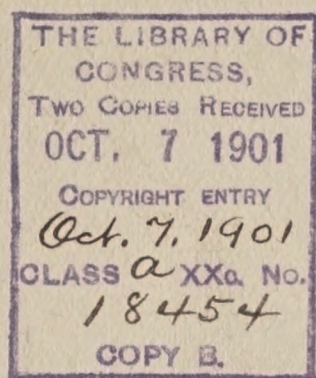
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A LATIN-QUARTER COURTSHIP.*

"'Tis thus that an ardent youngster makes
The Latin Quarter a land of love."

—*Edmund Clarence Stedman,*
after Victor Hugo.

I.

AFTER Stephen Ormizon had put the finishing touches to the last page of his novel, *A Voice from the Wilderness*,—which he did in Paris, early in August, 1885,—he was anxious, for precautionary reasons that we need not enter into here, to have a copy made of the manuscript ; and to this end he advertised for a copyist in the *Morning News*. The post brought him thirteen replies : ominous number. Of these, six were hopelessly bad in the prerequisite of penmanship. Six were edifying specimens of English as she can be wrote, when venturesome and intrepid Frenchmen seriously bend their minds to it. The thirteenth, also, appeared to be of native authorship ; but it was feasible. Written in a delicate feminine hand,

* Formerly "A Land of Love," originally published in *Lippincott's Magazine*.

upon paper that was haunted by the mere ghost of a sweet smell, it ran thus :

“ No. —, RUE SOUFFLOT, August 8, 1885.

“ SIR,—In response to the enclosed advertisement, cut from the *Morning News* of yesterday, I beg leave to say that I should very much like to make the copy which you desire, if you infer from this example that my handwriting will be suitable.

“ Very respectfully yours,

“ D. PERSONETTE.

“ TO MONSIEUR S. O., Office of the
Morning News.”

“ I guess,” said Ormizon to himself—“ I guess D. Personette is my man ; though, on second thoughts, D. Personette is probably a woman. I wonder whether she is an old woman or a young woman, a pretty woman or an ugly woman, a married woman or a single woman, or a widow. This,” sniffing at the paper,—“ this perfume suggests something rather nice. So does the chirography. It’s elegant and graceful, and at the same time free from those nonsensical hair-lines and flourishes. Yes, I suspect . . . Still, you can’t be sure ; and quite possibly she’s not a woman, after all. These Frenchmen often write ladylike hands, and scent their letters as they do their gloves and handkerchiefs. Well, at any rate, I shall soon find out ;

for I'll go at once and pay D. Personette a visit."

He had his boots blacked, and put on his best frock-coat. There was no telling what sort of person this Personette might be; and he surmised that he should perhaps want to create a favorable impression. If she were by chance a young and pretty woman, now, you understand—! Then he left his house, and after a walk of five or fewer minutes—for he himself dwelt in Rue Gay-Lussac—was catechising the concierge of No.—, Rue Soufflot.

"Monsieur Personette?" he demanded, in an off-hand way.

As the conclusion of some debate with himself, he had resolved to assume, for the purposes of a working hypothesis, the masculinity of his correspondent; impelled to do so in part, it may be, because, secretly hoping that the truth was otherwise, he thus avoided from the outset the risk of a disappointment.

"Monsieur Personette?" the concierge rejoined, with a dubious shrug and gesture. "Mademoiselle Personette, you wish to say, is it not monsieur?"

"Ah, yes; precisely; Mademoiselle Personette. À quel étage?"

And so she was a woman, in point of fact. Yet

—mademoiselle? Dire potentialities resided in that title mademoiselle. Mademoiselle Personette? A vision of ancient spinsterhood, gray, tall, angular, ascetic, with thin lips and a perpetual frown, clad in neat though rusty alpaca, flitted rapidly before our hero's mental eye. Mademoiselle Personette. . . Ah, well, it didn't much matter one way or the other; and, anyhow, time would show.

"Cinquième à gauche," the concierge had meanwhile announced, and retired within his den.

Ormizon tugged up five slippery flights of stairs, redolent of beeswax, turpentine, and bygone cookery, and pulled the tasseled bell-cord that dangled outside the door at the left of the topmost landing. The door at the right was decorated with a tin sign, proclaiming, "M. Maccarin, Dentiste Américain." It didn't look like a very American name; but it gave Ormizon for an instant a glow of compatriotic feeling.

"Mademoiselle Personette, is she at home?" he asked of the woman who presently opened to him, doubtful whether this might not be Mademoiselle Personette herself.

"Ah, oui, monsieur," she answered, with that peculiar Parisian inflection which no combination of letters can be made to render, and which seems to give to "Ah, oui," the force of "Why, of

course. You ought to have known it." "Take the pain, monsieur, to enter into the salon, and to seat yourself."

Obviously, this was *not* Mademoiselle Personette. He handed her his visiting-card, and added, "Say that it is the gentleman who advertised in the *Morning News*."

"Ah, oui, monsieur ; le *Mawnee Noose*," she repeated, with a toss of the head, to show that she understood ; and, dropping a curtsey, vanished.

After she was gone, he sat down, and began to look around him.

II.

It was rather a pretty, though a very modest, little room, this salon ; a bright, cheerful little room ; triangle-shaped, or nearly so, as such a number of rooms in Paris are. The walls were panelled in white and gold ; though the white had begun to turn yellow, and the gold to tarnish,—in some places, indeed, to scale off. An immense looking-glass, in a gilt frame sculptured with flowers and leaves and grotesque grinning faces, surmounted the mantel, by the aid of which Ormizôn gave a touch or two to his cravat, and subdued a refractory lock of hair. By chains, from the cen-

ter of the ceiling, swung a large old-fashioned lamp, of bronze and porcelain, with a shade big enough for an umbrella. A flood of sunshine pouring in through the open windows did a great deal to atone for a certain scantiness of furniture, and supplied the place of a carpet upon the highly-polished floor. An upright piano, with a lot of music piled on top of it, an engraving of Titian's Flora, two little landscapes in oil, a photograph of the Cathedral at Rouen, and a plaster bust of Victor Hugo, spoke for the fine arts; while a well-filled book-case represented letters. The air bore a faint, elusive, aromatic odor, something like sandal-wood, something like dried rose-leaves, the source of which Ormizon could not determine, but which, as he afterward found out, issued from a pot-pourri of old red Kaga, on the center-table, under the hanging lamp. He was trying, not very successfully, to deduce from these surroundings some more definite idea of their proprietress than he had got already from the sound of her name, when the door opened, and—

“Why, Mr. Ormizon!” cried an agreeable womanly voice, in which surprise and pleasure were evenly blended.

In a twinkling Ormizon was on his feet and half-way across the room. He saw before him a de-

cidedly pretty, plump little lady, perhaps thirty years of age, whose face was wreathed in smiles, and whose hands were extended toward him in a manner that betokened great and genuine cordiality, mingled with considerable bewilderment and wonder.

“Why, Miss—why, Dr.—Gluck!” he stammered. “Why—well—well, I declare!”

Then he took possession of the proffered hands; and they stood together, speechless, waiting each apparently for the other to commence an explanation.

“Well—there—sit down—do,” finally ejaculated the vivacious Dr. Gluck, pushing him toward a chair. “And, for mercy’s sake, tell me what this means.”

“I’m sure it surpasses *my* powers of elucidation,” he confessed, nodding his puzzled head. “You’re the last person I expected to find here. I called to see a certain Mademoiselle Personette—D. Personette, she subscribes herself. Unless that’s one of your *noms de guerre*—”

“Oh, no. That’s Denise. You see, Zélie—Zélie’s the maid who let you in—she thought Denise was at home; and when she discovered her mistake she came to me and gave me your card,—see, here it is,—and when I read your name,—Mr.

Stephen Ormizon,—well, you may just imagine ! But I couldn't believe that it was really you until I actually beheld you seated here. And even now, —oh, it's too good to be true. I'm not sure even now but you may be a ghost, an hallucination."

"I'm a pretty substantial one, I give you my word. But you—how—what—why, I didn't dream you were in Paris. I had an idea you were in Vienna, or Berlin, or somewhere. Wasn't it Vienna you were going to when you bade us all good-by?"

"Oh, yes ; but, then, you needn't have expected me to take root in Vienna. I left there ages ago. I've been here—let me see—ever since—why, it must be two years, almost. But you—have you dropped straight out of the clouds ? Or where *do* you come from ? And when did you arrive ? And how long are you going to stay ? And everything ? It—it's the most extraordinary coincidence I ever heard of in my life, upon my honor !"

"If you want to be correct, and complete the situation, you should observe, with the air of having made a discovery, that it shows how small the world is. That's the reflection cut and dried for just such emergencies. But it *is* odd, joking aside. I arrived clear back in May—the first week in May. I came from Italy—from Rome—where

I had been spending the winter, and basking under the Italian skies, which shed rain-water upon us almost every day. . . . But to think ! I never knew of anything more exasperating. It makes me want to beat my breast and rend my garments. Well, it's just my luck."

"Why, what ? What's the matter ?" the doctor inquired, in evident alarm.

"Matter ! Why, to think of all this precious time that I have lost—of all these weeks that I might have been enjoying in your society—if I had only had an inkling that you were here."

"Oh, well, never mind. No use crying over spilt milk. Besides, we'll make up for it. Just fancy the jollifications we shall have now !"

"Yes—except that I've got to go home next month."

"Oh, is that so ?"—with falling voice.

"Yes ; I've engaged my passage for the 26th."

"Oh, dear ! that *is* too bad. But—but you can postpone it, can't you ?"

"Alas, I'm afraid not. I've been away nearly a year already ; and, besides, I've got business to attend to in New York."

"Oh, well, we'll simply have to make the most of the meanwhile, then ; that's all. And we'll do it, never fear. To-day—to-day is the 8th, isn't

it? And between now and the 26th of September—why, there's a lifetime! But tell me, how—oh, yes, I remember. You came to see Denise. But what—what in the world can you want to see Denise about?"

"Why, yesterday, don't you know, I advertised in the *Morning News* for a person to do some copying, and—"

"Oh! Then you—you are S. O.—the mysterious S. O. Well, I *never!*" And the doctor broke into a merry peal of laughter.

"I can't say that I see the joke," Ormizon complained.

Repressing her mirth, "Well, it isn't exactly a *joke*," the doctor admitted. "But Denise and I, we've speculated so much about who S. O. might be, and what he was like, and everything—and then to have it turn out to be you—you—well, it is too funny."

And she went off in a new peal of laughter.

"I'm glad it affords you so much amusement, I'm sure," he said, nettled a little.

"Oh, there; you needn't get on your dignity; for it's entirely charming, too. Do you know, we conceived of you—just fancy!—as a wretched old Englishman, who took snuff, and had a red nose, and great bushy gray whiskers. And we thought

your name was Solomon Oglesby, or something like that. And—oh, if Denise were *only* here! She—she'll be delighted."

"Will she, really? Well, that's good. . . . And now, by the bye, don't you think the proper moment has arrived for you to inform me who Denise is?"

"Why, Denise—why, she's Mademoiselle Personette, of course."

"That much I had already conjectured. I mean, who is Mademoiselle Personette! And how is she related to you?"

"Oh, she's not *related*. She—she's my chum, and my dearest friend, and my protégée, and—oh, it's a long story, all about Denise."

"Well, go on. Tell it to me. Do."

"Well, it begins away back at the time of my arrival here in Paris. I went to a horrid little pension in the Rue Vanneau, kept by a regular old cat whose name was Madame Minoir; and there I met Denise. She was boarding there, and we had seats next to each other at the table. She had recently lost her mother, who was an American lady; and the poor little thing was completely broken down in health and spirits. She did look so pathetic and interesting, in her mourning, with her pale face and great dark eyes, that I was drawn to her from

the very first. So—well, I began to take French lessons of her ; and I made her submit to my treatment ; and we fell desperately in love with each other, and vowed never to separate, and all that ; and finally, about a year ago, more or less, we rented this apartment, and set up housekeeping together. It's awfully jolly, and free, and independent ; perhaps a trifle unconventional ; but I'm old enough to chaperon us both."

"I should think it would be delightful. And you—I suppose you are carrying on your studies, of course, and getting wiser and wiser every day ?"

"Well, I'm working pretty hard—yes. I have a clinic of my own in diseases of the ear ; and then I'm going into animal magnetism, mesmerism, hypnotism, and that sort of thing, a good deal. Some time I'll tell you all about it. I dare say you've heard of Charcot's experiments,—haven't you ?—and all the extraordinary results he has obtained ? Well, I'm immensely interested in following them. I believe they will lead to a revolution in the theory and practice of medicine, and elevate it from the plane of mere empiricism to that of an authentic science. Ahem ! You smile. Well, I remember, you never could take my profession seriously. . . . Denise, she teaches. English and French, you know. English to the natives, and French to the

English and Americans. But just now she isn't very busy. Toward the end of summer the town is nearly empty ; and so it's Denise's dull season. She was very glad when she saw your advertisement ; though she was afraid she wouldn't stand much chance of getting the work. We supposed you'd have so many applications."

" Yes, I had thirteen ; and very amusing some of them were. Hers was the only one I paid the least attention to."

" And isn't it fortunate that you did so ? Otherwise— ! Dear, dear ! I can hardly believe my eyes even now. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if you were to vanish into thin air this very instant," said the doctor, laughing.

" You take the notion very cheerfully. To me, it wouldn't be a laughing matter."

" Oh, no ; nor to me, either. I only laughed at the *idea*. If it really happened I should be broken-hearted, inconsolable. And Denise—it *will* please her so. I do wish she'd hurry up and get here."

" No, no ; let her take her time. It's so long since I've enjoyed a real comfortable tête-à-tête with you—"

" There ! You base flatterer ! Have done. You wouldn't say such a thing as that to an old maid like me, if you had ever seen Denise. You'll

be perfectly fascinated by her. I know you will. . . . But now tell me, how's your mother? She—she's not here in Paris with you?"

"Oh, no, indeed. She's at home, in New York; or just now, I suppose, she's up at our country-place in Oldbridge. You couldn't tempt her to cross the ocean for any consideration. She dreads the sea-sickness so."

"But she's well, I hope?"

"Oh, yes, thank you. About as usual, at last accounts."

"And your cousin, Miss Clark?"

"Oh, Fanny—oh, she's the same as ever."

"Not married yet?"

"No."

"Nor engaged?"

"Well—no, I guess not."

"You only guess! Aren't you certain? Is there a young man?"

"I—I really don't know," he answered, with an imperceptible squirm. . . . He deemed it unnecessary to confess the truth,—a truth exceedingly distasteful to him, and which he tried to keep in perpetual banishment from his mind,—that he and his cousin were tacitly betrothed. That is to say, he had promised his mother to make Fanny his wife; and Fanny had promised her aunt to accept

Stephen as her husband ; but the two principals had never exchanged a word upon the subject with each other.

“ Well,” went on Dr. Gluck, “ of course, when I saw her, she was scarcely more than a child. But she bade fair to become quite pretty ; and I should suppose the young men would be flocking around her by this time. How old is she ? ”

“ About twenty, I think. Yes, she’s pretty enough, if you like that type. Blue eyes, fair skin, light brown hair. She’s a tremendously pious girl, you know. Teaches in Sunday-school, and carries tracts around to the hospitals, and prays for the unconverted heathen, and all that. Devoted to my mother ; and my mother loves her like a child of her own.”

“ And the Merriwethers—do you see as much of them as you used to ? ”

“ Oh, no. They moved to Newark very shortly after you sailed ; and for social purposes they might as well have moved to South America. I’ve scarcely seen them since. Last time I met Mr. Merriwether—it was on Broadway, one afternoon—he told me you were in Vienna. So you may calculate how long ago that was.”

“ Ah, yes. Dear me, what happy days they were ! I often think of them and wish them back.

What good times we did use to have, didn't we? But—Hark! Isn't that—I think that's Denise, just come in."

The doctor listened for an instant. Then, stepping to the door, "C'est toi, Denise?" she called.

"Oui, Isabel."

"Come here, dear, please."

Next moment Denise entered the room. . . .

III.

Now, the psychology of it I can not undertake to explain, but this is the fact: that at the sound of Denise's voice answering, "Oui, Isabel," Stephen Ormizon felt his heart all at once break from its customary easy pace into a quite obstreperous gallop, and the blood rush warm and tingling to his cheeks. Was it due to some peculiar electric or magnetic property resident in the voice itself? Possibly. It was at any rate a sweet, fresh, girlish voice, and forcibly suggested a sweet, fresh, girlish owner. Or was it that, all the while, in Ormizon's sub-consciousness, Denise had formed the subject-matter of his conjectures, and that now, at the prospect of an immediate encounter with her in the flesh, his smouldering curiosity, so to speak, leaped into flame? Or may it indeed have been—

as Dr. Gluck, in debate with me, has strenuously maintained—a subtle and occult prescience that his destiny was at hand? I simply record the phenomenon, and leave the reader to frame a theory that will satisfactorily account for it.

Denise entered the room, quite unaware of the presence of a strange man, with a question in her eyes aimed at her companion, as much as to ask, “What is it, Isabel? What did you wish?” She had progressed a yard or two beyond the threshold before she perceived Ormizon. Then she halted; and gave a little start of surprise; and suspended the operation of pulling off her gloves, which she had been engaged in; and waited, an interrogation-point.

“Mademoiselle Personette, permettez-moi de vous présenter Monsieur Ormizon,” said Dr. Gluck, with a flourish of the hand.

Monsieur Ormizon performed the courtliest obeisance in his repertory. Mademoiselle Personette curtsied, and suffered two starry eyes to shine for a second full upon Monsieur Ormizon’s face.

“Denise,” Miss Gluck resumed, “it was Mr. Ormizon who advertised in the *Morning News*.”

“Oh!” Denise responded; and instantly a change, which it would be hard to picture, came

over her entire little person. It was like the sudden precipitation of a frost. It seemed to say, "Oh, I thought you were a friend. But I see—it is only business."

"Yes," pursued the doctor, "you behold before you, in proper person, the redoubtable, the problematical S. O. Where, then, you wonder, are his bushy whiskers, his lurid nose? I answer, give him time. His name is not Solomon, but Stephen. Neither does he take snuff; but, I blush to own, he smokes and drinks. Neither is he an infâme Anglais, but a true and loyal son of the stars and stripes. . . . There, S. O., now you may sit down."

Denise looked thoroughly mystified, somewhat amused, and a little embarrassed, as though she could not at all account for the airs of familiarity that Isabel was taking on, but assumed that there must be some sufficient justification for them.

"Enfin," Miss Gluck concluded, "you never heard of so strange a coincidence. Mr. Ormizon called this afternoon to see you about his advertisement; and as you weren't at home, as she had thought when she let him in, Zélie brought me his card. And—and what do you suppose? I read upon it the name of one of my old and particular friends in New York—Mr. Stephen Ormizon! But, 'Oh,' I said to myself, 'it can't really be he.'

However, I thought I'd just take a peep into the parlor, to make sure ; and I did so ; and there, beyond a peradventure, he sat, as large as life ! Now, what do you say to that ? ”

Instantly the frost melted, evaporated. Denise smiled, and, with a little, graceful inclination of the head toward Ormizon, said, “ Why, how very strange and—and pleasant ! ” She spoke with the least trace of a foreign accent, chiefly remarkable in a certain weakness of her r's, and in a peculiarly distinct enunciation of the minor syllables that we are apt to blur. Her auditor thought it was notably quaint and pretty.

“ You've heard me speak of my friends the Merriwethers—the people I lived with when I was studying in New York ? ” the doctor queried.

“ Oh, yes ; many times,” Denise assented.

“ Well, Mr. Ormizon was as intimate with the Merriwethers as I was, nearly. We used to meet each other at their house regularly two or three times a week. He used to take tea with us every Sunday evening, almost. Don't you remember ? ”—turning to Stephen. “ And the theatre-parties we used to have ? And everything ? ”

“ Indeed I do,” was his rejoinder. “ Those were famous days. I shall always think of them with kindness.”

"And so shall I," said the doctor, with a touch of melancholy. "Ah me ! But to—to meet you again—this way—it's almost—it's the next best thing to getting back to them. It's like renewing my youth."

She put out her hand and gave Ormizon's a gentle pressure. He returned it with interest.

Denise, possessing herself of the doctor's other hand, patted it softly, stroked it, then kissed it, and murmured, "Chère p'tite Isabel. . . . But," she added, "you must not think of those times. That was before you knew me. That makes me jealous."

"Oh, you sweet thing," exclaimed the doctor, putting her arm around Denise's waist. "You have no reason to be jealous. I never knew what real happiness meant until I met you. But there ! A truce to sentiment. Let's sit down and be comfortable, and have a good long talk."

She and Denise seated themselves on the sofa, linking their arms together. Ormizon took a low easy chair, fronting them. The doctor herself supplied most of the good long talk ; calling up reminiscences and anecdotes of the old days in New York, and humming tunes from *Pinafore*, which had then been at the acme of its vogue. She beguiled in this wise pretty much the entire twilight.

Ormizon fixed his eyes upon Denise's face, where they remained, until, fading by slow degrees, it at last vanished in the darkness.

It was a pale, tired little face that Stephen Ormizon saw before him there in the thickening dusk, but a very interesting face, a very pretty and winning face, *he* though even a very beautiful face, nevertheless. I owe I incline to his opinion ; for, as the author remarks, with great penetration, upon page 49 of *A Voice from the Wilderness*, "after all, the beauty of a woman's face is ultimately determined by the eyes. If the eyes be truly beautiful, they impart beauty to the whole face ; if the eyes be other than beautiful, then, no matter how fine, how regular, the other features, the whole face is spoiled." Therefore, applying this rule to the case of Denise : if the warm red of her full and daintily chiseled lips ; if the delicate modeling of her nose and chin ; if her low and shapely forehead, snow-white beneath a wealth of waving dark-brown hair : if these did not suffice to make her beautiful, her eyes, in my judgment, unquestionably did. Over-arched by eyebrows as firm, yet as exquisite, as if penciled in India-ink, they were large and luminously dark ; though whether black or brown it would be impossible to tell. In certain lights, in certain moods, they were indisputably black : a

soft, liquid, yet impenetrable black. But quite as often they were two or three shades off color,—a radiant, transparent brown, into which your gaze could plunge fathoms deep and never reach the ethereal, fitful fire that burned at the bottom. Yes, they were a lovely pair of eyes ; and they illumined and beautified the entire countenance that they pertained to, giving it life and spirit. They were what you would call ardent, passionate eyes. Ormizon says “soulful” ; but I can’t find the word in the dictionary. When you looked into them, you would think, “How that girl could love !” Yet they were wistful, pathetic eyes, aglow with a mysterious, appealing sadness ; so that you would add, “And how she could suffer, too !” They were dangerous eyes for a susceptible young man to let his own associate with, at any rate ; and as Stephen Ormizon beheld them shining in the twilight, upturned upon the doctor’s face, he felt strange and powerful forces loosening his heart and going out toward their possessor. He felt a strange, strong tenderness and compassion for her, a vague longing to be something more than a mere acquaintance to her, to make himself in some way of importance, of service, of comfort, to her. And when now and then, wandering a little, her eyes encountered his,—lo ! he felt the keenest, the most

violent, yet withal the most delicious thrill go darting, quivering, wildly through the length and breath of his body ; and he had to catch for his breath. . . . In straightforward English, though he never so much as suspected it at the time, he was getting his first taste of the intoxicating bitter-sweet of love.

All at once Miss Gluck started up, and cried : "Why, mercy on me ! It's gone and got dark ; and I never thought of it. I've been so absorbed in hearing myself talk, I never thought to light the candles. Denise, why didn't you remind me ?"

"Why, I never thought of it, either," said Denise. "You were so interesting."

Ormizon extracted a box of matches from his pocket, scratched one of them, and asked, "Shall I light these on the mantel-piece ?"

"Yes, if you please," Denise replied ; and he obeyed, while she busied herself with drawing the window-curtains.

At this juncture the servant, who some two or three hours earlier had admitted him (and whom, as he remembered with much wonder, he had taken to be perhaps Mademoiselle Personette), appeared in the doorway, and announced, "Ces dames sont servies."

"Pshaw !" was his reflection, "I have stayed

too long. What will they think of me? Now I must clear out at once." And offering his hand to the doctor, "Well, good-by," he began. "You know how delighted I am to have discovered you, and I hope—"

"Goodness!" she interrupted. "You don't mean that you are going to run away from us like this." Her air of dismay was unmistakably genuine. "Why, that would be absurd. Can't you—won't you—*do* stay and take pot-luck with us."

Involuntarily his eyes sought those of Mademoiselle Denise. In them he read an earnest appeal to him to do as the doctor wished. For an instant—his heart beat so—he could not speak. In the end he said: "Thank you. You are very kind. I should like nothing better."

They went into the cosiest of little dining-rooms, and arranged themselves around the snowiest of little tables. Denise with her own hands laid a cover for him. Then the servant brought in an inspiring pot-au-feu, which they immediately proceeded to discuss.

"Well," declared Ormizon, "I think that this is by all odds the most novel, the most deliciously Bohemian sort of thing I ever knew of—the way you two young ladies keep house here together. It's so thoroughly independent, such

a vast improvement on a hotel or a boarding-house."

"Yes," concurred the doctor, "it's very good fun."

"It is charming," added Denise. "It was an inspiration of Isabel's. Ah, if you could compare it with that pension of Madame Minoir's, in the Rue Vanneau!" A little shrug, a little grimace, which Ormizon thought adorable; so piquant, you know, so inimitably Parisian. "N'est-ce pas, Isabel?"

"Oh, don't mention that old dragon of a Madame Minoir," cried the doctor. "She used to steal into our rooms and read our letters; I'm sure she did. But here—why, we're just like husband and wife; aren't we, Denise?"

"Perfectly," Denise responded.

"Which is which?" Ormizon inquired.

"Now, what a question!" cried the doctor.

And thereupon the quasi-conjugal pair went off in a regular gale of laughter, as though it were the funniest joke in the world. It's a wonder, how little it takes to excite the risibility of light-hearted young women.

"Well, I suppose you have your interesting little family jars, and curtain lectures, and the whole programme, don't you?" he pursued.

"Nonsense, you cynic. We have never had a single cross word ; have we, Denise ?"

"Nevair ! It has all been honeymoon from the first."

"Why, it's hardly credible," he vowed, "both of you being women. I thought women always quarreled."

"Well, they *are* a quarrelsome lot as a rule, it must be confessed. But you see Denise and I differ from ordinary specimens of our sex. I'm a doctor, and Denise is an angel. Nobody could quarrel with Denise."

"Oh, tais-toi," cried Denise, coloring. "Mr. Ormizon will think we are a society of mutual admiration." Then, to change the subject, "Where do you live, Mr. Ormizon ? In what part of Paris ?"

"I live not a stone's throw from you,—around the corner, in Rue Gay-Lussac."

"Is it possible !" put in the doctor. "Rue Gay-Lussac ? A howling swell like you ? Why, how did you come to choose such an unfashionable neighborhood ?"

"Now don't call me a howling swell. I object. You'll convey an altogether false impression of me to Mademoiselle Personette. This coat that I have on—it's absolutely the best in my wardrobe, I give you my word."

"Well, then, question, question!" cried the doctor.

"Let's see; what *was* the question?" he demanded.

"Why you live in Rue Gay-Lussac?" Denise informed him.

"Oh! Well, because it's the Latin Quarter—the quarter of Murger, of de Musset, of Rodolphe, of Frédéric. I wanted to live in the Latin Quarter for the sake of its traditions, its atmosphere, its associations."

"How funny! Why, it's on that very account that most people prefer to live elsewhere. It isn't considered the *thing*, you know, except for students. We live here because it's cheap. Low rent, you understand. It would be cheaper still, and pleasanter, in Passy, or Auteuil, or somewhere; but then Denise would lose so much time and get so tired, going and coming to and from her lessons."

"Yes; but here it's so interesting; there's so much color, life, picturesqueness. You feel as though you were right in the midst of the *mise-en-scène* of a romance. Passy, Auteuil, and such places are so frightfully provincial, so dead, and dreary, and out of the world. I should hate to live in Passy. I'd as soon live in Brooklyn."

"You are a man," observed Denise. "You would prefer Passy—you would prefer anything almost—to the Quartier Latin, if you were a young girl ; is it not so, Isabel ?"

"Why is that ?" he asked.

"Because in Passy it is possible for a young girl to venture alone out in the street without always being insulted. Here in the Latin Quarter—no ; it is not allowed. Each day the young girl is rendered miserable—stared at, addressed, humiliated. Ask Isabel. In other parts of Paris it is not so bad. Here—oh-h-h !" She gave the most charming little shudder. "Every day I must run the gauntlet of these students, who are without heart, without feeling. I would—I would *razair* die."

"Ra-th-er," corrected Dr. Gluck. "Don't forget your t-h's, Denise."

"By—by—*by Jove !*" thundered Ormizon, eyes flashing, cheeks flushing, fingers clutching dangerously at the handle of his knife. His boiling blood had nearly got the better of him. He remembered himself just in time to steer clear of a stronger adjuration. "By Jove ! Do you mean to say that—they dare—to be rude—to you ? I—I'd like to catch one of them at it. I'd like to be around when one of them offers to speak to you. I'd

wring his neck. I'd break every bone in his body. I—I beg your pardon. I forgot. But—but, good Lord ! I never heard of anything so outrageous."

"Vive l'Amérique !" cried Dr. Gluck, waving her napkin as though it were a flag. "You're a thorough Yankee, S. O. Do you know what a Frenchman would suppose, to see you flare up like that ?"

"No. What ?"

"He'd put you down for a lunatic. Respect for an unprotected woman, provided she's young and pretty, would be proof positive of lunacy to the way of thinking of an average Frenchman. Wouldn't it, Denise ?"

"Yes ; that is so," acquiesced Denise. "Women are fair prey ; especially on the left bank of the Seine."

"Every day she comes home perfectly exhausted,—sick with mortification and anger," said the doctor. "I tell her she ought to follow the example of the eels, and get used to it ; but she doesn't. They don't bother *me* much, though. So there are some compensations for being old and ugly."

"Old and ugly !" echoed Denise, with withering scorn. "You old ! You ugly ! Why, you are as beautiful—as beautiful as—"

In default of a simile, she kissed her hand, and tossed the kiss across the table to the doctor.

"As one of your kisses, do you mean to say?" queried the doctor, maliciously.

"Oh—you—oh!" stammered Denise, all blushes and confusion.

Ormizon took a sip of wine. No sooner had he done so than a smile of pleasure lighted up his face. Miss Gluck noted it.

"You like it?" she questioned.

"Perfectly delicious. I never tasted anything approaching it. Such a peculiar, spicy flavor. What is it?"

"A cousin of mine sent it to me from Bulgaria, where he was traveling. It has rather a dark and sinister name. It's called Turk's Blood."

"Why, that's very romantic and picturesque, I should say," he remarked, emptying his glass.

Denise refilled it for him.

"And," Miss Gluck went on, "my cousin wrote, the natives have a curious little ceremony that they practice whenever a bottle is uncorked. . . . Let's see. How does it go, Denise?"

"Why, you remember. 'What is this?' asks one. . . ."

"Oh, yes. Well? And then?"

"Why, how funny that you should forget!

Another replies, 'It is Turk's Blood.'" This, Mademoiselle Denise rendered in a chilling stage-whisper. "'Then let it flow freely,' they all shout in chorus."

"It strikes me the Bulgarians are a very sensible people," said Ormizon, and carried his glass to his lips.

"Now, then, a toast, a toast!" called the doctor. "All good things are three, the Germans say. Let us then baptize our triple alliance."

They clinked their glasses, and drank the toast with enthusiasm.

Presently, "You have never been in America, Mademoiselle Personette?" Ormizon inquired.

"Hélas, no. And I suppose I shall never go."

"Why hélas? Do you mean that you would like to?"

"Oh, I should love it. I should be delighted."

"Indeed? Is that so? Why, that's rather odd."

"Odd? How?"

"Why, most French people, especially Parisians, find their own country sufficient unto itself. They have no desire to travel."

"Ah, yes. But you forget. I am not all French. I am one-half American, Anglo-Saxon."

"True. Still, you have grown up in France, amid French influences; and I should suppose

that in your feelings, your sympathies, you would be essentially French, despite your American blood."

"Ah, well ; that depends. In some things, yes, you are right. In others, no. In patriotism, yes ; I am French to the core. In war, I would fight for my country to the death. When we have our revenge with Germany, I will wish I was a man, to be a soldier, to kill those barbarians, those tyrants—oh ! But in many ideas I am thoroughly American ; or, as you say, Anglo-Saxon. In my heart there comes, when I speak the word *America*, a warm glow of love. It was the country of my mother. Though she lived in France twenty, twenty-five years, she was always American, never French."

"Down deep," averred Dr. Gluck, "Denise is an out-and-out Yankee. She has the American *character*, which is the important thing. But it's colored and warmed up by the French *temperament*, which is undeniably an addition. Now, you take the matter of reading. If anything has an influence in shaping a person's character, reading has ; and she reads English pretty much all the time."

"Ah, indeed ! Are you really fond of our literature ?" he asked. "In general the French are so indifferent to it."

"Oh, to me, it is by far the best. It is that

which I mean when I say that in many ideas I am Anglo-Saxon. It is the English literature which moves me most deeply, which has most to do with forming my opinions."

"So that, in a certain sense, you have adopted the Anglo-Saxon point of view?"

"Yes; what you call the Anglo-Saxon feeling about life. French literature—it is the spirit of it which I do not like. If it is not cynical, pessimistic, then it is sentimental, goody-good. If it is not extravagant, bombastic, then it is insipid, sickish-sweet. If not Daudet, it is Malot; if not Hugo, Lamartine. We have in French no Howells, no Emerson, no Browning—nothing so healthy, so tonic, you know."

"Well, I don't know whether I could subscribe to your condemnation of French literature. Daudet, it seems to me, is a great artist; and, then, you have left out Halévy. What could be healthier or more charming than his *Mariage d'Amour*? And then, there's Flaubert, the greatest of them all. But I'm very glad to find that you like ours. And the three you mention—Howells, Browning, Emerson—are they your favorites?"

"How can any self-respecting woman forgive Howells, after he let Dr. Breen go back on her profession?" cried Dr. Gluck.

"Yes, especially Browning," said Denise, in answer to Ormizon. "They are yours also—no?"

"Well, I had an Emerson phase—yes. I don't read him much nowadays, though. Browning I have never tackled."

"Oh! You have never read Browning!"

"Not more than ten lines. It took me so long to understand them, I got discouraged. I'm not sure I really did understand them, even now."

"Oh, I wish I were in your place!"

"Why?"

"You have such a world to conquer, such a feast awaiting you. Why, do you know, there is in life no other pleasure equivalent to that which one enjoys in reading Browning?"

"No. I didn't know it," he replied, amused, yet also charmed, by her fervor. "Is it so? It's a pretty sweeping statement."

"Yes; but it is true,—literally, absolutely true. He lifts you into a new atmosphere; he vivifies you. Oh, when you read him, you feel so exhilarated, so exalted! He makes you thrill and tingle through and through. He is—really—without exaggeration—he is the greatest poet that has ever written,—greater than Dante, greater than Shakespeare, even. You look incredulous. You don't

believe it. Wait till you have read him. You will say so too."

"In what does his greatness especially consist?"

"Oh, in many things. But especially—I believe especially in his wisdom. Wisdom, I mean, in the scriptural sense. His insight, his deep knowledge, his unfearing love, of the truth,—the fundamental, the essential, the permanent truth of human nature and life. He pierces down to the very marrow, the quick, the core, of human nature. There is not, apparently, a single human experience which he has not—how you say?—plombé?—fathomed: not a single doubt, fear, hope, temptation, aspiration,—in fine, emotion. By the force of his imagination, he has tasted all the joys, endured all the agonies, achieved all the heroism, committed even all the sin, of which human nature is capable. He knows, he comprehends it all."

She paused. Ormizon impulsively exclaimed, "Go on, go on."

"Well, that is what I mean. Maybe I do not make it very clear. But—well, this is the point: you will find somewhere in Browning, a voice, an expression, for every feeling, for every mood, that you can have. All your own vague, nebulous thoughts, you will find them precisely, eloquently stated. All your own unutterable feelings, you will

find them uttered for you. And in such a virile, vigorous style ; so nobly, so beautifully, so melodiously. Oh, you—you must read him right away. You will wonder, after you have read him, you will wonder how you have ever lived without him. He is so satisfying, so consoling, so inspiring. Why, for me—why, if I have to choose between giving up Browning and giving up all the rest of literature and art,—music, painting, everything,—I shall not hesitate for an instant. He is like a prophet, like Isaiah,—only greater,—much, immeasurably greater.”

Color had mounted to her pale cheeks. Her brown eyes burned with eagerness, earnestness. Her voice vibrated with feeling. Ormizon thought that he had never beheld anything half so beautiful, never heard anything half so eloquent, as Mademoiselle Denise in this moment of enthusiasm.

“I shall certainly apply myself to Browning forthwith,” he said. “I had always imagined that he was affected, pedantic, obscure, tedious,—I don’t know what all.”

Denise sprang up as though she had been stung.

“Just wait an instant. I will show you,” she cried, and ran out of the room.

"You see, you've got her started," said Dr. Gluck, smiling.

"She—she—she is——" He stopped himself. "Adorable" was the word at the tip of his tongue. He suppressed it, and left his judgment of her forever unrecorded.

"Yes," assented the doctor, "she's a great enthusiast."

"And you—are you too a Browning-phile?" he asked.

"Oh, dear, no. I don't go in for poetry. Landolt on the eye and ear is poetic enough for me."

Denise came back, carrying a book in her hand.

"Now," she explained, "of course his best things are long,—too long to read aloud. But I will just read you one or two of his little songs,—just to give you a taste, you know, to whet your appetite."

Then she read *Misconceptions*, *In a Year*, and *Mesmerism*. When she had done, Ormizon confessed that it was without exception the most beautiful poetry that he had ever heard; though I suspect his admiration was occasioned rather by the reader and the reader's way of reading than by the intrinsic merit of what she read. Indeed, I suspect that if she had read as many of Edward Lear's nonsense verses, or of Martin Tupper's

philosophical proverbs, Ormizon would have accounted them triumphs of the poetic art.

"Well," said Denise, "you will take this book home with you, when you go, will you not? And then you can read it by yourself, and study it; and then, I am sure, you will be as much of an enthusiast as I am."

After dinner they went back to the salon.

"Now, Mr. Ormizon," said the doctor, "I know that you are dying to smoke. Therefore, please light your cigarette."

He obeyed with thanks.

"'Sabel, will you not play a little?" asked Denise.

The doctor sat down at the piano, and played with a good deal of dash and spirit Weber's *Invitation to the Waltz*. After which, "Now, Denise," said she, "it's your turn."

Very delicately and intelligently, in a sweet, fresh, nicely-trained mezzo-soprano voice, to the doctor's accompaniment, Denise sang Gounod's charming barcarolle, *Dites la jeune belle*.

Pretty soon after she had finished, Ormizon bade her and the doctor good-by.

The melody of the barcarolle rang in his memory all night long.

IV.

The next day was Sunday.

Ormizon, usually an early riser, did not wake up till nearly ten o'clock. That, however, was natural enough ; for he had not fallen asleep till very late the night before. He had tossed from side to side, in an unwonted state of excitement, for two or three hours after he went to bed. His insomnia he attributed to the coffee he had drunk after dinner.

Even now, advanced as the forenoon was, he did not at once forsake his pillow. He reached out of bed, and procured a cigarette from the table near at hand. Then he lay still, smoking, gazing at the ceiling, absently noting how the cracks thereof seemed to shape themselves in queer, uncanny physiognomies, and thinking over his visit in the Rue Soufflot.

The sensations that accompanied this effort of memory were exceedingly agreeable. On the whole, he told himself, it had been as pleasant an evening as he had ever passed in his life. How strangely, how surprisingly, the whole thing had befallen ! And how delightfully ! How far he had been from anticipating anything like it, when he had started out to respond in person to the note

from D. Personette ! Are these happenings which we called accidents,—are they really accidental ? Or, as one would like to be able to believe, is the hand of Providence in them, after all ? What—what a dear good creature Dr. Gluck was ! So genuine, so simple-minded, so cordial, so warm-hearted ! A veritable child of nature ; yet always a lady, always a gentlewoman, despite her excess of animal spirits, despite her profession, despite her tendency toward the Bohémienne. And Denise—ah !

At the thought of Denise, a host of unspeakable emotions, very delicious, yet provocative of great unrest,—of a strong keen longing for—for what ?—for something that he could neither name nor describe,—began to stir turbulently in his bosom.

“ Denise ! ”

He pronounced her name. Then he drew a deep, long breath, every inch of which thrilled him through and through. Then he took a puff at his cigarette, and pronounced it again :

“ Denise ! ”

How frail, how dainty, how exquisite, how—how—how adorable and fascinating she was ! And how—what—what a shame it was that she should have to slave her life away, and put up with all manner of hardships and humiliations, in order to

earn her meagre livelihood ! And how pitiable, how pathetic, her position, alone in the great world, without father or mother, kith or kin,—with no one but her friend the doctor to depend upon for sympathy, for counsel, for protection ! Oh that there were some way in which *he* might do something to render her lot easier and happier ! . . . Those little shapely white hands of hers,—what wouldn't he give for the privilege of holding one of them a little while in his ! And that mysterious, passionate, appealing fire that palpitated deep in her eyes ! And her voice, and that delicate touch of a foreign accent ! And those poems,—how charmingly she had read them ! And that barcarolle,—how bewitchingly she had sung it ! . . .

“Di-tes la jeu-ne belle, où voulez-vous aller ?” He hummed the tune of it softly to himself.

But suddenly he started to a sitting position ; and his face took on an expression of perplexity.

“Well, I declare !” he muttered, half aloud. “Well, I never heard of anything quite so idiotic !”

He had just recalled a ridiculous little circumstance : namely, that he had totally omitted and forgotten to discuss with D. Personette the business that had brought about their meeting. He

had not so much as broached the subject of the copying of his manuscript.

But now his mind misgave him. It was in scorn of himself that he cried, "What! Shall I—great, strapping fellow that I am—shall I—because I dread the labor, the fatigue, the drudgery, of it—shall I let that delicate little girl wear herself out over it? Shall I shirk my task, and let her perform it?—throw down my burden, and let her take it up? Isn't she heavily laden enough already? How pale and tired she looked,—poor little thing, dear little thing! And do I—do I want to see her grow paler and still more tired, slaving for me? Oh, shame!"

He had wrought himself into quite a fine frenzy of indignation, before it occurred to him to remember that she no doubt very much needed the money. But even this consideration did not altogether allay his pangs of self-reproach. If there were only some means by which he could make the money hers without allowing her to do the work! Alas! he cudgeled his wits in vain. He could conceive of none.

"No," he concluded, "I suppose I shall have to let her do it. It goes horribly against the grain. I never shall be easy in my conscience, so long as I think of her breaking her back in my service.

But there's no way out of it. So . . . Yet—yet—ah! I know what I'll do! I—I'll pay her—I'll make her take—twice—three times—what I should have to pay another. . . . Yes, I will. I'll say that the regular price for such work is—let's see . . . well, a franc the hundred words. She's never done any copying before, and won't know the difference. Yes, sir; that's what I'll do. That's a great idea. *Di-tes la jeu-ne belle, où voulez-vous aller?*”—his relief at having solved the problem finding vent in a jubilant burst of song.

He got up and dressed; drank his coffee, which had grown stone-cold, waiting for admittance on the floor outside his threshold, where Désiré, the garçon, had left it some hours earlier; dashed off a perfunctory letter to his mother, recounting, among other things, in a casual fashion, the events of yesterday; went to an *Etablissement Duval* in the vicinity for his breakfast; and finally, at about two o'clock, presented himself at Mademoiselle Personette's door.

“Ah, monsieur,” the servant said, with an accent of commiseration, “the ladies are not at home—are gone out to walk.”

“Oh, is that so?” he faltered.

Here was a contingency for which he had made no allowance. His spirits dropped many fathoms.

The bitterness of his disappointment was significant, though its significance he did not yet understand.

"You don't know where they have gone?" he asked, inspired by a forlorn hope.

"Ah, no, monsieur. They did not say."

"Well, please tell them that I was here," was his last request, in a sinking voice ; and, turning about, he set his dejected face toward home.

But when he reached the corner of the Boulevard St.-Michel, and saw the greenery and whiffed the freshness of the Luxembourg Gardens across the way, he changed his course. No ; why should he go home ? he asked himself. Why not enter and stroll for a little, over there under the trees ?

It was a mellow summer afternoon,—bright sunshine, soft sweet air. The gardens were alive with people,—with many sorts and conditions of men and women, all industriously amusing themselves according to their several tastes : tidy old ladies seated in the shade, gossiping and doing needle-work ; white-mustachioed gentlemen, puffing their cigarettes, reading their newspapers, exchanging their vociferous opinions anent public affairs ; rosy-cheeked children, in bright-hued dresses, with frantic war-whoops and wild explosions of laughter, dashing hither and thither at their games, like

flashes of colored lightning ; sturdy peasant nursemaids with their charges ; soldiers in their regimentals, priests in their cassocks, students with their serviettes, tourists with their guide-books ; but principally, it seemed to Ormizon, lovers with their sweethearts. Yes, every other young fellow had his pretty girl clinging to his arm, smiling into his eyes : the contemplation of which spectacle made our hero feel acutely his own singleness, and brought him a realizing sense that it is not good for man to be alone,—roused, that is to say, a hunger for like companionship in his own bosom, just as the spectacle of one's neighbor enjoying a toothsome dainty will whet one's own appetite for food. . . . A state of consciousness that was perhaps intensified by the warmth and the fragrance of the weather.

“Ah me, if they had only been at home !” he was sighing sadly to himself.

“Why, Mr. Ormizon !” suddenly a familiar voice called out.

His heart gave a great suffocating leap.

“Why, Mr. Ormizon !” the doctor repeated.

“How perfectly delightful !”

Denise did not speak ; but she raised her eyes to his, and smiled.

Neither did Ormizon speak. His voice and his

vocabulary, together with his presence of mind, had deserted him. He doffed his hat, and bowed his lowest. At last he contrived to stammer forth, "I—I have just left your house. I—I just called upon you."

"Oh! And found us out! That was too bad. But—but how did you know we had come here?" the doctor wondered. "Did Zélie tell you? No: she couldn't have. She didn't know. Though, of course, if we had dreamed that you were going to call, we should have left word."

He sought to disguise his perturbation under excessive volubility:

"It was my lucky star which guided me. I was going home to chew the cud of my disappointment in solitude, when an impulse, an inspiration, prompted me to turn in here. It's a striking instance of telepathy. I shall make a record of it, and transmit it to the Society for Psychical Research."

"Really?" questioned the doctor, literally. "Do you really think so?"

"Oh, you must not make fun of the Society for Psychical Research," cried Denise, laughing. "Isabel is a member."

"Oh, then you were only *joking*!" said the doctor, reproachfully. "You ought to be ashamed."

"We have come for the music," Denise went on to explain, "and to see the people, and everything. It ought to begin very soon now, ought it not?"

It began next instant. The band struck up the familiar strains of the Turkish Reveille.

"Shan't we sit down?" Ormizon suggested.

They were standing directly in front of the little open-air café in the middle of the garden. They established themselves at one of the small iron tables, and called for sirop de groseille and crisp hot gauffres. The band played lustily. The people moved about, laughing and chattering. The doctor gave him permission to light a cigarette. Denise kept smiling upon him in the most amicable fashion. Take it for all in all, Stephen Ormizon's felicity was probably as complete as that of any man abroad that day.

All at once Denise exclaimed, "Oh, this gauffre of mine! It is the best I have ever tasted. It is done juste à point. You must each take a bite."

She broke it into three morsels, and with her own fingers deposited one of them upon the doctor's plate, and another upon Ormizon's.

He felt as though it would somehow be a desecration to *eat* that bit of gauffre. He would have liked to preserve it forever. But gauffre, by its

very nature, is perishable to the last degree. Besides, to put it into his pocket would attract attention, and very possibly make the ladies think he was a madman. So, with the courage of despair, he gulped it down.

"Yes, it is certainly the most delicious gauffre I ever tasted," he declared, with unquestionable sincerity. Had not her fingers touched it, gloved though they were?

By and by, "Allons," said the doctor. "Let us walk a little."

As he sauntered at Denise's side through the soft summer weather, a glow of well-being suffused his senses. The very smell of the leaves, brought out by the heat of the sun, regaled his nostrils like the rarest incense. His blood went leaping, tingling, through his veins. Without knowing it, he began to sing softly to himself,—

"Di-tes la jeu-ne belle, où voulez-vous aller?"

"Why, how lovely!" suddenly cried Dr. Gluck. "There's Lancelot. Isn't it jolly?"

"Oh, yes," chimed in Denise, with an air that betokened much pleasure, and that sent a pang of jealousy shooting through Ormizon's breast; "so it is. Quel bonheur!"

"Lancelot! Lancelot!" called the doctor, flourishing her parasol to attract Lancelot's notice.

"Hi! Hello!" Lancelot responded, and elbowed his way to where they waited for him.

After greetings and hand-shakes had been exchanged between the new-comer and the ladies, "Mr. Ormizon," said the doctor, "allow me to present our friend Mr. Palmer."

Mr. Palmer was a tall, thin young fellow, of five-or six-and-twenty, with clean-cut aquiline features, deep-set, intelligent gray eyes, and a thick shock of brown hair that fell below the collar of his coat at the back. The coat in question was a Prince Albert, faded, threadbare, white at the seams, frayed at the binding, and conspicuous for its exceedingly long skirts, which descended as low as the wearer's knees. On the top of his head he wore a small soft wide-awake hat, that produced a somewhat incongruous effect of boyishness. At the other extremity he was distinguished by a pair of wonderfully large feet, encased in shoes that needed blacking. . . . He was what you would call an odd-looking chap, yet pleasant-looking, prepossessing. You would not have been in the least surprised, either, when Dr. Gluck, after her introduction, added, "Mr. Palmer is an artist."

The two young men shook hands, eying each other rather askance, as young men under such auspices sometimes will.

"How are you?" inquired Palmer.

"Glad to meet you," announced Ormizon; thinking in his soul, "I wonder whether this fellow is a—I wonder whether by any chance there's anything between him and Mademoiselle Denise."

This suspicion of a possible rival robbed the sky of half its color, the breeze of half its balm.

"Well, doctor," Lancelot declared, "this is real nice. What do you suppose? I was just around to your place, to ask if you and Mamselle, here, didn't want to go down to Suresne for dinner. Well, sir, Zélie, she said you weren't at home, and didn't know where you'd gone; and I felt quite broke up, until, thinks I, just as like as not they've gone to the Luxembourg to hear the music. So here I came, hunting for you. But it was about as hopeless as hunting for a needle in a hay-stack; and I was beginning to get discouraged, and to give you up; when first thing I knew, I heard you hollering out, 'Hey! Lancelot! Lancelot!' And I looked; and there, by Jupiter, you were, as sure as pop! . . . Well, now, will you go?"

"Oh, Suresne! By all means," agreed the doctor. "It's a splendid idea."

"Oh, Suresne! Suresne is the loveliest place in the world," cried Denise. "An open-air dinner at

Suresne ! Hurrah ! And then afterward we can walk in the Bois."

"You'll come along too, won't you ?" Lancelot demanded of Ormizon. "Dutch treat, vous savez."

"Oh, yes, thanks ; I'm with you," Ormizon replied.

"And now," concluded Lancelot, "so's to have plenty of time, let's start right off—hey ?"

"Oh, yes ; in order to have plenty of daylight. It gets dark so early now," assented the doctor.

"Oh, what fun !" murmured Denise, clapping his hands. "Lancelot, you were inspired."

"No ; there can't be anything between them," Ormizon was reasoning. "She's altogether too frank and cordial with him for that."

He drew a deep breath of relief.

They left the Luxembourg, and were jolted in an omnibus over the cobble-stones from the Odéon to the Place de la Concorde, whence they embarked for Suresne aboard a bateau-mouche.

Under friendly skies, the sail down the river to Suresne is always pleasant. In company with Denise, how could Ormizon help finding it trebly so ? They sat forward in the bow of the boat, delightfully close together, where they could get the full benefit of what breeze there was, and enjoy

without obstruction the prospect ahead and to either side. His sense of propinquity to her kept his heart in a constant blissful tremor. Before long they had left behind them the quays of Passy and Auteuil, with their hand-organs and their dancing-parties ; had cleared the frowning fortifications ; and were gliding onward through the still, cool waters, between sleek, grassy banks, in the shade of great overhanging trees ; while far and wide the surrounding country lay smiling Danae-like in its sun-bath of gold. It was past four o'clock when they reached Suresne.

"Now," said Lancelot, "I don't want to hurry anybody ; but I move that we get our dinner first thing of all. I'm pretty nigh famished myself. Fact is, I haven't had a square meal in a week. I've been saving up for this spree. All those in favor of sailing right into the eatables, please signify it by saying ay."

"Ay !"

"Ay !"

"Ay !"

So they took their places in the garden of one of the river-side restaurants, and for the next hour or two applied themselves to their knives and forks ; not to mention their wine-glasses, which flowed with amber-hued Châblis—at a franc a bottle. Ah,

such Châblis ! fragrant of the grape, soft as oil upon the palate, looking like liquid sunshine, tasting like nectar of the gods. And such friture-de-seine ! A hundred tiny fishes, fried golden brown, each of them, as Lancelot fervently avowed, "melting in the mouth like a trill in the throat of a nightingale." And for the pièce-de-résistance, such a fricandeau-à-l'oseille ! "It's so good," cried Lancelot, "I'll have to have another." Which he proceeded to order, and to eat, while his companions waited in murmurous admiration. And finally, for dessert, such plums, such apricots, such figs !—figues-à-goutte-d'or—bags of purple satin, bursting with golden honey. . . . Their conversation all this while was of a most light and frivolous, yet a most entertaining, quality : so, at least, I am informed by Ormizon. But when I have pressed him for a synopsis of it, he has admitted that he can't remember a single word. "It wasn't so much *what* she said, you know, as—as the fact that *she* said it, you see," is his lucid statement of the case. "After dinner," he adds, "we crossed the bridge, to spend the sunset and the 'quiet colored end of evening' in the Bois, among the trees. And she sat on a rock, and sang the evening hymn from David's 'Désert' ; and that was the brightest sunset, the tenderest twilight, I ever witnessed in my life."

They returned to town by the eight o'clock boat. Dr. Gluck complained of feeling a little chilly, and thought she had better seek the seclusion of the cabin.

"But you children stay right here," she insisted. "I'm not going to deprive you of the pleasure of the sail."

They unanimously demurred against allowing the doctor to remain in solitude below; but she settled the question by declaring, "Very well. Then I'll sit it out up here, and catch my death of cold."

"Oh, come," put in Lancelot, "let's arrange it thusly. You," addressing Ormizon, "you and Mamselle stay where you are; and the doctor and I, we'll retire to the cabin and talk about ghosts. There's nothing I get more solid comfort out of, than I do talking with the doctor about ghosts. She really believes in 'em, you know; and when she gets started on the subject she's immense."

He and the doctor disappeared down the companion-way.

Next instant the boat shot around a curve in the river; and, "Oh, how lovely!" cried Denise, with an ecstatic little gesture.

"What?" Ormizon queried.

"Why, do you not see? The moon."

Surely enough, there was the moon, a great, round, red patch of flame, slowly floating upward from behind the trees, and transmuting the bubbles on the surface of the water to carbuncles and rubies.

"Oh, how lovely!" Denise repeated. "And what a sweet smell there is on the air—like new-mown hay! And the ripple; do you hear the waves rippling, as we cut through them?"

"Yes; it's very fine," he said. . . . To himself he was holding forth as follows: "I suppose I've got to start in about that copying sooner or later. I suppose the present is as good a time as any. We're alone; and I can talk to her with greater ease and freedom than I could if the doctor were by. Yes, I guess I may as well make the plunge."

He turned to Denise. She was gazing pensively up at the moon; and her eyes softly reflected the light of it. He shrank from broaching so unromantic a topic. Nevertheless, he was anxious, he was determined, to have it over with. He gritted his teeth, clinched his fists, and began:

"Er—mademoiselle—you know—that is—I—I hate to lug anything so—so inappropriate—upon the carpet at such a moment; but, you know, we have never yet spoken together about that—that

copying that I advertised for ; don't you remember ? ”

“ Oh, yes,” was her response. “ That is true. Why, how absurd ! I had forgotten all about it.”

“ Well, so had I, almost. But I suppose we may as well arrange about it. I suppose we may as well have the matter settled ; don't you ? ”

“ Oh, yes ; certainly.”

Her tone indicated that she was not perfectly unembarrassed, either.

“ Well, you may think that I'm a frightful lazy-bones not to do it myself. But I've got several good reasons. Among others, I'm troubled with writer's cramp.”

“ Oh,” she murmured, sympathetically.

“ Then, besides,” he went on, “ I'm sure, if I should undertake to copy it, I shouldn't be able to let it alone. I should begin fussing with it, and trying to alter it and improve it ; and I'd end by spoiling it and making a mess of it. Yes, I've been over it times enough already ; and my only safeguard now lies in leaving it just as it stands, with all its faults.”

“ What is *it* ? Something that you have written ? ”

“ Yes, a novel. That is, at least, I mean, it's an attempt at a novel.”

"Oh, how interesting! Tell me, what is it about?"

"Oh, that's a long story. You'd better not get me wound up on that subject. About love, religion, lots of things."

"And its title?"

"Well, I have thought of calling it *A Voice from the Wilderness*. How does that strike you?"

"*A Voice from the Wilderness?*" she repeated reflectively. "Oh, excellent. I think it is an excellent title. I am sure I should want to read a book with that title. Ça pique l'appétit. It excites one's curiosity."

"Do you really think so? I'm very glad if you do. I hope, though, that you won't find the title the best thing about it. I remember one novel that was published a year or so ago, and the critics said the title was the only part of it worth reading."

"How cruel of them! How bad it must have made the poor author feel! When—when is yours coming out?"

"Oh, I don't know that it will ever come out at all. Perhaps no publisher will accept it. That's what happens to most novels, you know. But—but to come back to the point. It's pretty long—

nearly a hundred thousand words. Do you think you will care to undertake such a labor?"

"I do not know how long that means—a hundred thousand words. But I suppose, if you are not in a great hurry, that I could do it. I write pretty rapidly."

"Oh, no; I'm not in a hurry. I shan't leave Paris for a month or more. In that time you could get it finished, even if you didn't write more than two or three thousand words a day. But, you know, copying is an awfully fatiguing sort of work. I hate to think of you tiring yourself out on my account."

"Oh, I shall not mind the fatigue. It will not be so bad as teaching. That is the hardest work I can imagine—to try to make an Englishwoman pronounce the French as it should be, or a Frenchwoman pronounce the English. Ça—c'est épouvantable! I shall be excessively interested to copy your novel. Is—is it exciting?"

"Well, you can decide that question better than I can. I'm afraid it isn't very. I'm afraid in some places it's dull, and drags. I'm afraid it's a little too serious. But when would you like to begin?"

"Oh, any time. As soon as you desire. Immediately. To-morrow, if you like."

"Yes ; I think the sooner the better ; so that you can take it leisurely. I'll bring the manuscript around to you to-morrow morning."

"Thank you. Then I will set to work at once."

"But remember, you have more than a month to do it in. So, don't work more than a little every day. Never tire yourself out over it, will you? Just as soon as you begin to feel tired, put it by till to-morrow."

"Oh, n'avez pas peur, monsieur. You do not know what a grand—how you call it?—paresseuse—idler—I am."

"Well, I want you to promise. I shouldn't be able to sleep at night, if I thought you were allowing yourself to get tired on my account."

"You are very considerate, Mr. Ormizon."

"Of myself ; so I am. You see, I don't covet insomnia. And now—and now—about—terms."

"Oh, that, of course, I leave entirely to you."

"Well, the regular price for such work is a franc the hundred words. Do you think that will be enough? That would make—let's see—that would make a thousand francs for the whole book."

"A thousand francs ! Why—why, I never heard of such a thing. I—oh, I am sure you must be mistaken. I am sure it is too much."

“ Oh, no ; that’s the regular price : twenty cents—a franc—for each hundred words. Honestly.”

“ Oh, but—! A thousand francs ! Do you know—have you any idea—how long it would take me to earn that, giving lessons ? ”

“ No. How long ? ”

“ Six months—half a year. In a whole year I can earn perhaps two thousand—no more.”

“ Two thousand ! Is it possible ? Why, that—that’s only four hundred dollars.”

“ Well, that is the most I can earn. You see, the greater number of my pupils, they are French, of the little bourgeoisie, who keep shops, and like that. They pay me—well, how much you think ? One franc the lesson of an hour. The English, the Americans, of course they pay much more—three francs even. But I have only a very few of them, and only for a few months of the year. In these months of the summer—August, September—I can earn scarcely anything at all. I must depend on what I have saved. . . . Oh, a thousand francs ! That makes me rich ! ”

Ormizon did not speak. He could not trust himself to speak. There was only one thing that he could think of to say ; and the time had not yet come for saying that.

"Yes," Denise continued, "it makes me rich. And now—now—I can go see Dr. Marsac."

"Dr. —!" faltered Ormizon, aghast. "Why, are—are you in ill health?"

"Oh, no—not I. It was Dr. Marsac who took care of my mother. She was sick so long; and he came all the time, and was so kind and good; and I have never been able to pay him. I have needed every sou to support myself. But now—Oh, Mr. Ormizon, you have made me feel so happy!"

She lifted two beautiful, earnest, tearful eyes upon Ormizon's face. It was only by the exercise of main force that he kept himself from folding her in his arms and kissing her.

"I was before," she went on rapidly, "I was the most miserable girl in the whole world. That thing—that debt—it lay upon my conscience day and night, all the time. And I was so hopeless. I could see no prospect to pay it. Ah, mon Dieu! It made me so uneasy, so ashamed. It is like a great load which you have lifted off my back. I thank you—I thank you from my heart, Mr. Ormizon."

"Dear—dear Mademoiselle Denise—" he was beginning. Then a lump, or something, got stuck in his throat, and choked his utterance. . . .

There was a little pause, during which the moon shone sentimentally.

All at once she looked up, and asked very gravely, with a naïveté that had its due effect, "Is—is it true that you leave Paris next month?"

Oh, how violently his heart leaped! How madly it began to pound against his side!

His voice shook as he answered, "I—I sail on the 26th."

Suddenly a bell began to ring, and the boatmen sang out, "Place de la Concorde!"

"Oh, here we are!" exclaimed Denise, starting up.

Lancelot and the doctor joined them. They took a cab to the Rue Soufflot.

V.

"Well, Mr. Palmer," began Ormizon, after they had parted from the ladies, "did you and the doctor exhaust the subject of ghosts?"

"It's inexhaustible," returned Palmer; "that is, when the doctor seriously assaults it. You know, Dr. Gluck is what you might call a scientific spiritualist. She accepts all the phenomena alleged by the spiritualists as authentic; vows she's seen 'em with her own eyes; and then she undertakes to ex-

plain them on a scientific basis. Well, of course I don't agree with her ; I think it's all stuff. But I enjoy getting her stirred up on the subject, just the same. She has a large head, and she talks well. But then I always enjoy the doctor, anyhow. Take her for all in all, she's the best fellow I know. I often think what a pity she ain't a man. She's got so much of what the French call *bonhomie*."

"Yes, that's a fact. She's a jolly good fellow," Ormizon assented. "You know she and I have been acquainted years and years."

"So I judged from something she let fall. Well, now, she's not half bad-looking either, is she? Her coloring is tip-top ; and though she's short and plump, she's shapely, and she carries herself well. Kind of funny she's never got married. She'll be an old maid before long now, if she don't look sharp. . . . I say, by the way, are you the enviable possessor of a watch and chain?"

"Yes."

"Well, would you mind telling a less fortunate mortal what o'clock it is?"

"It's half-past nine."

"Thanks. I thought it was later. To confess the truth, I feel the need of some slight stimulus. And what would you say to reposing our weary bones for a little at yonder wayside inn?"

He pointed to a brilliantly lighted café on the Boulevard St. Michel, into which thoroughfare they had just turned.

"It's a good idea," Ormizon assented.

They sat down at one of the café tables. Palmer ordered absinthe. Ormizon contented himself with beer.

"Smoke?" suggested the latter, proffering a bundle of cigarettes.

"Thanks. I prefer a pipe," said Palmer, and proceeded to fill a short clay pipe with Caporal tobacco. After he had sucked it well alight, "I was once the proprietor of a timepiece myself," he resumed. "But I've loaned it to my uncle."

Ormizon smiled.

"Now, I dare say you've never had occasion to curry favor with your uncle—hey?" questioned Palmer. Then, without waiting for an answer, "Well, you're almighty lucky. I've been on intimate terms with the old gentleman for many years. Just at present there's a trifling coolness between us, caused by the fact that my stock of marketable chattels, jewels, ornaments, articles of virtù, etcetera, has run dry; and he is not possessed of sufficient artistic discrimination to be willing to advance anything upon my own creations. However, I live in the hope that this sad misunder-

standing may be set right, and our fond hearts reconciled. He's a convenient, though a stern and exacting relative, your uncle. Lord bless you, he and I have had dealings ever since I was a lad. Now, when I was a divinity student—"

"Why, have you been a divinity student?"

"In the course of a long and somewhat eventful career, I've been various sorts of things. I've been a farmer, a carpenter, a school-teacher. Then, when I was eighteen, I went on to Boston with the idea of becoming a lawyer. But after six months in the law school I got disgusted. I wanted realities, and they gave me formulas. I wanted bread, and they gave me red tape. Then I packed my traps, and moved over to the theological seminary. There too, however, I paled and sickened. The atmosphere of cant, sham, insincerity, didn't agree with me. It was death to my self-respect. I'd look at those sleek, smug-faced, unfledged parsons, and I'd tremble, by George, to think that I might grow to be *like* them. No, sir; I've knocked around a good deal, but I never struck a hole yet where there was more downright meanness, and untruthfulness, and envy, and what you call pure cussedness, and less Christianity, than there was in that whited sepulchre of a divinity school. Why, the art schools here in Paris, why,

they're nest-beds of virtue compared to it ; and you know what their reputation is. Gad, it makes me sick, merely to remember it. . . . Well, after that I turned my attention to medicine. I didn't enjoy it ; I didn't especially believe in it ; I thought it was nine-tenths humbug and pretense : still, I was in a fair way to obtain my M.D.—which, I've often thought since, would have been my mortal damnation—I was in a fair way to obtain it, and to start out in the practice of my quackery, when, during one summer vacation, I tried my hand at sign-painting. The transition from a sign-painter to a would-be picture-painter was easy and obvious."

Ormizon laughed. "And next? What do you mean to be next?" he asked, with a flippancy which he was very soon sorry for.

"No, sir. There's no next on my programme. At last I'm firmly anchored. Art is not my mistress ; she's my wife. I'm not coquetting with her ; I'm married to her for better or for worse—especially for worse. Indissolubly wedded we are, and shall remain, till death parts us. We've starved along together for some four years already, and I guess we're not likely to quarrel for a good while to come. She's jealous, she's exacting, she knows how to make you feel mighty uncomfortable and unhappy, her favors are hard to win ; but she's

honest, she's real, she's worth while ; I'd rather eat a dinner of herbs in her company than a stalled ox in any other ; I love her with all my heart. That's about the size of it, Mr. Ormizon. It took us a long time to find each other out ; but we were meant for each other from the beginning, all the same. Why, look here. I was born and raised 'way down in the little village of Unity, Maine, among the Quakers, where they have no more idea of art than they have of Egyptology, and where they'd hold both to be equally ungodly. My father, and his father before him, and his grandfathers, clear back to the settlement of the colony, had been Quakers and farmers. So it ain't strange that I had to flounder around a good deal, and make considerable many false shots, before I finally hit the mark. . . . No, sir ; my art is dearer to me than my life. Art is truth ; and truth is the only thing worth bothering about in this world."

Palmer paused, and relighted his pipe, which had taken advantage of his monologue to go out.

"I beg your pardon for speaking as I did," said Ormizon. "It was very silly and thoughtless of me. . . . You—you are studying here in Paris, I suppose ?"

"Oh, don't mention it. That's all right. I understood that you were joking. . . Yes, I'm at Ju-

lien's. Before that I was at the Students' League in New York, and also worked under Sartain in his studio. I've been here going on eighteen months. I arrived in Paris with a capital of four hundred dollars, which I'd saved up teaching drawing in a young ladies' boarding-school out West—in Indiana. Ah me ! where are those dollars now ? Gone to join the Hebrew children, I dare say. Well, well ! But my heart yearns toward them, whereso'er they be. If I should meet one of them here on the Boulevard to-night, I'd greet it with the rapturous enthusiasm of old friendship. I'd welcome it with a kiss and a hug. I'd kill the fatted calf, I'd set up the drinks, in its honor. I'd forgive its perfidy, even ; for, between you and me, it was frightful, it was disheartening, the cold-blooded haste those dollars made to desert me, after my advent here . . . Ah, well, I suppose I might as reasonably wish for the snows of yesteryear. Here's peace to their ashes." He emptied his glass.

"You've got something better than money, Palmer ; a light heart."

"Have I, though ? Perhaps, my dear fellow, it's not so light as it seems. Anyhow, I wish it was as light as my purse—or, for that matter, as light as my stomach is most of the time. That's my great

trouble. I can't seem to get enough to eat. I can't afford to spend much on my eating, especially when I haven't got anything to spend; and, consequence is, I go to bed hungry 'most every night. Lately I've adopted the system of saving up all through the week, and then going in for a real square meal on Sunday—such as I had to-day. I tell you, a dinner like that one we had down to Suresne this afternoon—that's the sort of thing that makes a man of me. On a full stomach, sir, I rise in my own estimation at least fifty per cent. . . . Hi! Garçon! Encore une absinthe-à-la-gomme!"

"Yes; but your system is a very imprudent one. You'll ruin your digestion."

"You show me a means of getting rich, and I'll drop the system like a hot potato. If you've got any Philistines to be despoiled, trot 'em around to my studio, and I'll feast like an epicure every day as long as they hold out. Otherwise—don't talk to me about digestion."

"Where is your studio?"

"My studio and residence combined are around in the Rue St. Jacques, on the top floor of the Hôtel du St.-Esprit. 'Sky-parlor reaching heaven-ward far,' you understand. And I'll tell you what. Don't you want to come over there with me now?"

I'll show you some of my work. I possess the largest collection of Palmers in existence."

"I should like to, above all things."

"Well, come on."

Ormizon called for the reckoning, and was about to pay it, when Lancelot cut in with,—

"Oh, I say. Just compute my share of that, will you? How much is it?"

"Oh, that's all right," returned Ormizon. "This is my treat."

"Not much it isn't. Not if the court knows itself, and it strongly suspects it does. Just calculate my percentage of our liabilities, and allow me to fork over. You see I can't afford to let you treat me; for I shall never be able to return the compliment. No, sir; we'll have to proceed on the Philadelphian plan from the beginning. Besides, it's the *mode* here in Paris; and there's nothing like being *à la mode*."

So Lancelot, who, like the improvident Bohemian that he was, denied himself bread and meat, and then squandered the price of a dinner upon absinthe-à-la-gomme,—Lancelot contributed his portion of the sum due; and the two young men set forth, arm in arm, for the Rue St.-Jacques. Their course thither led them back up the Rue Soufflot, and past the door of Denise's house.

Sweeping the façade of it with his glance, "I suppose our fair friends are wrapped in blissful slumber," Lancelot observed. "May their dreams be as sweet as their dispositions! What—what a regular daisy that little Mamselle is, ain't she?"

"She's very charming," Ormizon admitted.

"So gentle and helpless and sort of appealing, don't you know? Yes, sir, she and the doctor make a first-rate team."

The Hôtel du St.-Esprit was a dingy students' lodging-house, with a great sign over the entrance, advertising "*Chambres et cabinets meublés.*"

"Now comes the tug of war," Palmer said. "Breathe through your nose, and take it easy."

He led the way up five flights of stairs.

"Well, sir, here we are," he resumed, when they had reached the top. He unlocked a door. "Winded, but still intact, here we are in my castle and my sanctum, my bedroom, my kitchen, my atelier, my boudoir, and my salon. Just stay where you are till I strike a light. Otherwise, you might upset something, or bark your shins."

He lighted a candle, and then a kerosene lamp.

It was a small room, not more than ten feet by twelve; and it seemed smaller still, because it was crowded to its utmost capacity with the furniture necessary to a sleeping-apartment, and with the

paraphernalia necessary to a painter's workshop. A bed, a wash-stand, an armoire-à-glace, a table, two or three chairs, an easel, a lay-figure, and in one corner an old-fashioned hair-trunk studded with brass nails, left but little space to move about in, and gave one the feeling of standing in an over-stocked lumber-room. The walls were tinted a soft olive gray, and barnacled with a multitude of canvases, of various shapes and sizes, bearing designs which, in the scant light of the lamp and candle, Ormizon could do no more than guess at. There was but a single window ; opposite which an open fireplace served as pantry and kitchen closet, being full to the brim with pots and pans, and with divers brown paper parcels that looked as though they contained food-stuffs. The air was loaded with an assortment of odors, forcible among them that of turpentine, that of stale tobacco-smoke, and that of cold ham.

"Sit down," said Lancelot, "and make yourself at home. You see, I've been keeping house on my own hook lately, which accounts for the batterie de cuisine you behold yonder in the chimney. I've got an alcohol lamp ; and, if I do say it who shouldn't, some of the repasts I get up here are immense. I mean in quality,—not in quantity. That, as I said before, that's my bugbear, my bête

noire. I sometimes forget what enough signifies. If my appetite weren't built on such a magnificent scale, it's really astonishing, the small income on which I could make out to live. Now, take the matter of rent. What do you suppose the rent of this establishment is, monthly?"

"Well, let's see. Well, I don't know. Perhaps—perhaps fifty francs. I pay seventy around in the Hôtel de l'Univers, Rue Gay-Lussac. But my room is rather larger, and it's only au troisième. Yes, I guess your rent is somewhere in the neighborhood of fifty francs."

"Oh, but the Rue Gay-Lussac is the height of swelldom, compared to the Rue St.-Jacques. It's the Beacon Street, the Fifth Avenue, the West End, of the Latin Quarter. I looked for a room there myself; but the prices scared me away. My rent, sir, is twenty-five francs a month, service included. That is, when I pay it. Just now I'm in arrears for a couple of months. But Madame Pamparagoux, my landlady, is of a trustful, hopeful nature; and so she lets it stand. Well, to continue, as I was saying, if I had an ordinary appetite, I could eat for two francs a day. That would bring my living expenses down pretty low. See?"

"I *don't* see how you could eat for two francs a

day ; no. I should like to hear you explain it. It never costs me less than five,—it generally costs me at least six,—and I usually go to a Duval."

"Why, bless you, there you are again with your lofty aristocratic notions. A Duval ! . . . Why, man alive, there are lots of fellows I know who eat for two francs a day, and less even. But they don't approach within gunshot of a Duval. Well, for example : first breakfast, one sou of bread, one sou of milk—ten centimes. That's taken at a bake-shop. Second breakfast, at a restaurant, but not a Duval,—second breakfast, one sou of bread, one sou of soup, five sous of meat, three of vegetables—fifty centimes. Then go to a table-d'hôte for your dinner, at one franc twenty-five. So you've had your day's rations for one franc eighty-five. The surplus of three sous you distribute as tips among the waiters."

"Yes ; but what sort of food is it that they give you at these cheap restaurants ? They may flavor it so as to make it palatable ; but is it nourishing ?"

"Well, it seems to be. The boys seem to worry through on it, anyhow. Of course there's a strong presumption that the beef is horse ; but, then, horse is all right if you possess a stout set of teeth, and if you get enough. But for me, there's the

rub You *don't* get enough. Now, you take that table-d'hôte at one franc twenty-five. It ain't bad as far as it goes. But I—I'm obliged to eat two of them in order to get filled up. So, as I said, I've begun to cook for myself. On two francs fifty a day I can make out fairly well, and then go in for a regular rattling feast on Sunday. . . . But come. I wanted to show you some of my work."

Palmer took up the lamp, and, holding it aloft, pointed now to one, now to another, of the unframed canvases on the wall, pronouncing a running commentary upon them as he did so. Ormizon said he liked the work immensely. So far as he could judge, it was full of ability, and promised better still. It was certainly very pleasing and interesting. "But why do you always sign H. Palmer?" he wondered. "H. doesn't stand for Lancelot."

"Good Lord, man," cried Palmer, laughing, "my name ain't Lancelot! That's only a bit of facetiousness on the part of those women-folks. They must have their joke, you know, and they've dubbed me Lancelot—well, I give it up why. My name is Hiram. Hiram Hutchinson Palmer is what I was baptized. I've dropped the Hutchinson, and simply sign H. Palmer. That answers for all practical purposes, and is shorter and more

convenient. But now, I say, sit down again, and let's have a smoke."

While they smoked, Palmer told his guest something about the art-school, Julien's, at which he was studying.

"You pay forty francs a month for whole days," he said, "or twenty-five a month for half days. That entitles you to easel-room, and as much turpentine as you want to use, besides models. That don't sound like much, but they say the old man, Julien, is getting rich on it, all the same. Julien, you know, is a retired model himself, and he opened this school as a speculation. Every now and then they have an exhibition of the work the boys have done, with cash prizes. The prizes ain't exactly independent fortunes; still, if a fellow collars one, it helps along. I scooped in fifty francs last month, for instance; and that fed me for quite a while. But, as I was going to tell you, your forty francs a month entitle you to all the privileges of the school. Then the masters, they give their services free-gratis-for-nothing. At Julien's there are Bouguereau, Boulanger, and Lefebvre, the three greatest draughtsmen living. They come to the school three times a week, examine what the boys have done, point out its faults, show you as well as they can how to set it right. They do this,

as I say, for nothing,—simply for the love of art ; which, I claim, is glorious. They relieve each other monthly. One month Bouguereau ; next month Boulanger ; and so on, round and round. This month we have Lefebvre. I tell you, he's grand. He's terribly severe, you know, unsparing in his criticism, mighty sarcastic sometimes, and all that. If he suspects that a fellow ain't in earnest, that he's just fooling, or going in for splurge or show, the Lord help him ! Ain't he savage ! But he's got a heart as big as an elephant's ; and when he sees that a fellow means business, when he sees that a chap is working sincerely, honestly, just as well and just as hard as he knows how, I tell you he's the kindest, he's the gentlest, he's the most encouraging old boy that ever drew the breath of life. It sometimes makes the tears start to my eyes when he comes up in his fatherly way and puts his hand on your shoulder and starts off on his remarks with ' Mon ami, mon cher fils.' Then, as like as not, he goes ahead and gives your work particular fits, and then he winds up, ' But courage, my friend ! courage, patience, and hard work ! At your age I have done worse myself.' It's beautiful. It's a pity we haven't got a few men of that stamp in America. But no ; your Yankee painter, he's on the make. He ain't going to apply

his valuable time and dazzling genius to the drudgery of teaching, unless there's money in it."

"Oh, well, you must make allowances for the American painter," put in Ormizon; "he has such odds to contend against. Teaching is about the only method at his command by which he can earn his living. If he could get rich on the sale of his pictures, as these Frenchmen can, I have no doubt he'd be glad to give his services as a teacher without pay."

"Well, maybe there's something in that. Still, you can't dispute this: that, taken as a general thing, the Frenchman loves his art better, and the money he may make out of it less, than the American does. There's a devotion, an enthusiasm, in the French artist, that you don't often find in the Yankee. Now, you take Lefebvre. He reminds me of one of those old zealots you read about in history. His complete surrender of himself to his art is like the zealot's surrender of himself to his religion. But he keeps his head wonderfully clear, all the same. He's got the soundest philosophy of art that I ever heard expounded. His fundamental principle is this: Art means truth, interpreted by the imagination. A bad picture is bad just in so far as it is false. A good picture is good just in so far as it is true. He

says, 'My boy, when you are painting, never think of the rewards your work may bring you. Never think of the money, the applause, the reputation. Concentrate all your thought, all your energies, upon making your picture just as good—that is to say, just as true—as you possibly can. Cherchez le caractère—seek for the character, which means the essential truth, of your subject. Let all the rest take care of itself. I would rather do true work and remain poor and obscure, than do false work and become the richest, the most renowned painter of my time.' Then he emphasizes all the time the importance of good drawing. 'Learn to draw, learn to draw, learn to draw ; learn also to color,' is a maxim of his. For he says it is good drawing that requires time, patience, sincerity, hard work ; whereas many a tyro, many a charlatan, can produce an effective color piece."

As Ormizon was starting to leave, "I say, Palmer," he began, "I hope you won't mind, but—but as you seem to be a little hard up just at present, and as I happen to be quite flush, won't you—I wish you'd let me—I wish you'd borrow a little something of me. I could spare a hundred francs or so, just as well as not."

"Thanks, many thanks," returned Palmer. "It's awfully good of you to offer. But no ; I can't

borrow. I can't afford to. I don't know as I'd ever be able to pay you back, you see. But I'll tell you what you might do. If you feel like buying a picture—"

"Just the thing!" cried Ormizon. "If you have anything within my means."

"I guess there ain't any of my work but would be that," Palmer answered. "I don't set a very high price on it, yet. But I guess the best things I have are my black-and-whites, which I haven't shown you. Here. Glance through that."

He handed Ormizon a portfolio.

Ormizon began to inspect its contents. Pretty soon, "Is this for sale?" he demanded, holding up a pencil drawing.

"Yes."

"I take it. How much?"

"Oh, I don't know. What do you think it's worth?"

"Well—say a hundred francs?"

"Oh, no ; I guess it ain't worth more than fifty. It's the subject that makes it worth that. It isn't a very good piece of work."

"It's a mighty good likeness, though," said Ormizon, and counted out fifty francs.

"Thanks," said Palmer.

"Thank *you*. And good-night."

"Say," Palmer sang out after him, when he was half-way down the stairs ; "you needn't mention it to Mamselle—mind?"

"All right," Ormizon called back.

It was a pencil drawing of an allée in the Luxembourg Gardens. And walking up the allée, in the foreground, there was a lady, with a parasol in one hand, and a book in the other. And the lady bore really an astonishing resemblance to—Mademoiselle Personette.

VI.

As soon as Ormizon fully and clearly realized the nature of the sentiment that Mademoiselle Denise had inspired in him, two questions addressed themselves to his mind for serious meditation.

What the first one was, every lover will be able to guess. Had he any reasonable ground for hoping that his passion might some time be returned? Upon the determination of this, he felt, his own resolution in respect of the second must depend. What had he better do about his quasi-engagement with his cousin Fanny?

He knew that his mother had set her heart upon the marriage of Fanny and himself. He knew that it was with her no light caprice, but a deep and

steadfast purpose. Moreover, he had pledged himself to obedience in this regard by a solemn promise. Yet, he argued, if Denise should come to reciprocate his love, he would not merely be justified in recalling his promise and declaring the engagement off; he would be in all right, in all honor, bound to do so. His mother would not like it. At the outset she would take it very hard indeed. She was a high-tempered, imperious woman, fond of having her own way, and accustomed to have it. He did not like to think of the anger and displeasure she would be sure to visit upon him at first. But in the course of time she would grow reconciled—probably. And, anyhow, in affairs of this nature the persons to be chiefly considered are the principals—especially the lady. He did not wish to play the undutiful son; but he would rather do that than play the disloyal lover. Yes, there were certain proper limitations to the submission which his mother could justly expect of him. If he should have to choose between allegiance to his mother and allegiance to his sweetheart, he would not hesitate; it would be cowardly, dastardly, to hesitate; he would promptly and decisively choose the latter. . . . As for Fanny—fortunately, her heart was not involved. There was no love lost between Fanny

and himself. She liked him well enough, perhaps, in a certain pharisaic, condescending way, but she had never pretended to any warmer sentiment. Her attitude toward him had always seemed to say, "Now, mind ! I don't approve of you the least bit. You are a bad, worldly, selfish man ; and I am a dear, sweet, self-sacrificing little angel. You are a miserable sinner ; and I am a saint, all ready for heaven. But you are the son of my beloved auntie ; and for her sake, despite your many and glaring faults, I will be forbearing and Christian-like, and consent to tolerate, even to patronize, you a little. Am I not a perfect miracle of magnanimity ?" She had agreed to become his wife, just as she would have agreed to become a nun, or to wear bloomers, or to adopt a vegetarian diet, simply in compliance with the desire of her aunt. In her soul, doubtless, she would welcome a release from the obligation. . . . No ; he needn't worry about Fanny. She was a factor easily eliminated from the equation. . . . On the other hand, if Denise should finally and unconditionally reject him—! The bald statement of the contingency took his breath away. But there was no use shirking it. He might as well look it squarely in the face. Yes, if Denise should finally and unconditionally reject him—well, then he would go home and do his mother's will. In

that event, he would not care what happened to him, what became of him. He would go home and espouse his cousin. He regarded Fanny as a canting, self-righteous, self-satisfied little prig. But never mind. If he lost his own happiness, with Denise, he would at any rate insure his mother's, by making her niece his wife.

And now—and now, had he the slightest chance of winning Denise's heart?

After he took leave of Lancelot on Sunday evening, he went home to walk his floor pretty much all night, balancing this problem in his mind. With throbbing pulse, with quickened, tremulous breath, eagerly, feverishly, now aflame with hope, now sick unto death with fear, he weighed every pro and every con that he could think of; never advancing beyond this one invariable conclusion, which had been his starting-point: "I do not know, I dare not say." His reason forbade confidence. His desire would not allow him to become too despondent. When he repeated to himself that little impulsive question that she had asked him, "Is it true that you leave Paris next month?"—when he recalled the tone in which it was pronounced, the glance by which it was accompanied, his prospect for the moment looked dazzlingly, bewilderingly bright. But next instant, his common

sense reviving, he would groan, "No, no. It is impossible that she could have meant anything by that. Why, man alive, she—she's scarcely acquainted with you as yet. She never saw you till—till yesterday, by Jove; though it seems a lifetime. She isn't going to lose her heart to a stranger. You can't expect her to fall in love with you at first sight, you fool. No, no; God help me!" . . . So, in an ecstasy of mingled joy and woe, hope and despair, he wore the night out, tramping back and forth, up and down his room. How many times he carried Lancelot's pencil drawing of that allée in the Luxembourg to his lips, and kissed it, I shall not attempt to reckon. The absurd, infatuated fellow! Yet which of us, gentlemen, has never been guilty of similar folly? Which of you, mesdames, but has inspired like wild behavior?

At last, toward break of day, he threw himself all dressed upon his bed, and murmuring her name, qualified by sundry complimentary adjectives, to his pillow, fell into a restless sleep.

"Ah, the delicious anguish of new-born first love! How transitory it is; yet, for its brief duration, how all-important, how all-eclipsing, how all-consuming! What thrills, what pangs, what burnings and freezings of the heart! Into what a

strange, sweet, bitter, contradictory delirium it converts the happy sufferer's heretofore commonplace existence ! . . . Ephemeral as the dew, once passed away, it is passed away utterly and forever. Anguish, indeed, it is truly called ; synonyme for endless unrest and pain. But in the retrospect it seems an unalloyed celestial rapture ; and many and many are they, who would renounce all the treasures of the world, to experience its resurrection."—See *A Voice from the Wilderness*, chapter xxxv., page 326. The passion of which he was now getting his initial taste, Ormizon had already learnedly analyzed, and eloquently portrayed, in his novel.

Late Monday forenoon he carried his manuscript around to the Rue Soufflot and left it with Denise. She received him alone in the little triangular gilt-and-white salon. She had pinned in her breast a sprig of mignonette, the perfume of which penetrated to the innermost recesses of our hero's heart.

"Isabel is gone out," she explained, "since nine o'clock—to her clinic."

"I was wondering," said he, after he had delivered the manuscript, "I was wondering whether you and she would do me a great favor."

"Oh, I am sure we will. We will be very glad—if it is possible."

"Well, I see that they are giving *Monsieur Perrichon* at the Gymnase. I wanted to know whether you and she would go with me to see it to-morrow evening."

"Oh, and that is what you call a great favor?" she laughed. "Is that the American style—to name things by contraries? We shall be delighted. *Monsieur Perrichon*—it is the funniest play that was ever written. It is a classic of wit."

"Ah, then you have seen it?"

"Oh, no, never. I have gone but very little to the theater. I have read it, only. I shall be so glad to see it. It is very kind of you to invite us."

This last was said seriously, with wide eyes lifted to his face.

"It is you who are kind to agree to go," he returned, with equal seriousness.

And then there ensued an embarrassing little silence.

"Will—will you not sit down?" asked Denise.

They had both remained standing, he with his hat in his hand, throughout their dialogue.

"Oh, thank you; no. I must be going. Well, then, I'll call for you to-morrow evening—say at about a quarter-past seven. Well,—good-by."

This speech, and the resolution which it expressed, cost a huge effort of will. He would have liked nothing better than to sit down and enjoy a comfortable little visit with her. But he forced himself to consider that the place was Paris, and that she was alone, and to recognize that it wouldn't do.

She gave him her hand. He held it for a moment, reveling in its warmth and softness. Finally he tore himself away.

He drove over to the Gymnase, and secured a baignoire for the following evening. On his way back, he stopped at a restaurant for breakfast. Toward one o'clock he reached his own room, Hôtel de l'Univers, Rue Gay-Lussac.

He threw himself into an arm-chair, and began to wonder how he should survive the night and day that lay between him and his next meeting with Denise.

"For more than twenty-four hours I shall not see her. For more than twenty-four hours my life must stand still and wait. Merciful heavens, how shall I kill the time?"

The bare thought of the long, blank period that would have to drag away before he could again be with her,—the bare thought of it racked his brain, like the thought of eternity; made his heart stop

beating ; made his breath come in heavy, labored gasps. He must banish the thought from his mind. He must find some means of distracting his attention. He must find some occupation, must busy himself with something. Merely to sit, and wait, and count the seconds, would drive him mad ; so intense was his desire, so great the stress of his impatience. If—if he could but fall asleep, and not wake until the wished-for moment was arrived ! Life, which many people complain of as too short, was for him too long by some thirty interminable hours. By that amount he would gladly have abridged it.

He sprang up from his seat, and started to and fro through his room, striding caged-lion fashion, and counting his steps, " One, two, three, four,"—up to sixty, which, he calculated, would make a minute. Every now and then he would halt, and draw a deep, loud sigh, and frantically crush his temples between the palms of his hands. Very silly and irrational conduct, to be sure ; but thus it is that most impetuous, warm-blooded young fellows carry on, at this interesting tide in their affairs.

By and by he dropped into a chair again, and lighted a cigarette. He smoked without relish, simply for the sake of passing the time. As quickly

as he consumed one cigarette he lighted another from its expiring sparks. Presently he counted the stumps. Ten. He guessed that it must now be pretty nearly four o'clock. He secretly thought that it was later ; but his thought might be the offspring of his wish, and he said four, so as to be on the safe side, and preclude the possibility of disappointment. He looked at his watch—which for a long while he had purposely abstained from doing. He looked at his watch. . . . Must he believe his eyesight ? By all the furies ! It was only half-past two.

“ Oh, Lord ! I can't stand this ! ” he cried. “ I'd better go out for a walk.”

He walked the streets for the rest of the afternoon. He walked directly across the city as far as the Parc Monceau ; thence to the Arc de Triomphe ; thence to the Trocadéro ; thence along the quays to the Place de la Concorde ; thence to the Invalides ; thence, by a tortuous route, through narrow, crooked, picturesque streets, back to the Boulevard St. Michel. A long, circuitous walk, as any one may see by glancing at a map of Paris. Also an interesting walk ; but to its interest he was impervious. He walked at top-speed, his eyes fixed straight ahead, glancing neither to the right nor to the left ; again merely for the sake of kill-

ing time. The quantity of time thus disposed of was precisely two hours and forty minutes. It was now ten minutes after five o'clock.

He seated himself at a café table on the boulevard, and called for beer.

"Beer," he remarked to himself, "is a sedative. It will calm my nerves."

As he sipped his soothing draught, he mused: "If only in this big city I knew somebody whom I might call upon, in whose society I might while away an hour or two! If only in this crowd, constantly passing and repassing on the sidewalk, I might meet an acquaintance, espy a friendly face! Yes, there's Palmer, to be sure. But Palmer isn't exciting enough; and, besides, I have no right to inflict myself upon him. Ah, Denise, Denise! Where is she now? What is she doing? What is she thinking about? Not about me; that's certain; I may make up my mind to that. Oh, Lord! Still a night and a day before I can see her!"

He emptied his glass, and ordered another.

At the table next to his a young lady was seated alone. She wore a broad-brimmed straw hat; a very close-fitting gown of some dark red stuff diversified by large white dots; and a pair of high-heeled patent-leather slippers, the tips of which peeped out from beneath her skirt like a couple of

bold black eyes. Her face (a sufficiently pretty face ; a saucy, roguish face) seemed familiar to Ormizon. By accident, he caught her eye. She smiled, and volunteered, "Bonsoir, monsieur."

Ah, yes ; he remembered. This was the young lady who sold him his cigarettes and his postage-stamps, in the little shop next door to his lodgings.

"Bonsoir," he returned curtly, without lifting his hat, and addressed himself to his beer.

Not to be rebuffed, "Monsieur a l'air triste," she observed with the intonation of sympathy.

"Vraiment ?" was his response, more curtly still.

She subsided.

But pretty soon an idea occurred to him ; a temptation presented itself.

"Why not ?" he soliloquized. "It could not do no possible harm. It would help me to wear out this everlasting night. "It would keep me from thinking about—it would make me forget. It would be a diversion, an excitement. Anything, rather than this impatience, this suspense. Anything to hurry the time along. I—it—"

He got up, left his table, and took the unoccupied chair at that of his neighbor.

The next few hours passed rapidly enough. They dined together at a Duval, and afterwards

went to the Hippodrome. At eleven o'clock, before the entrance of the fair tobacconist's domicile, Rue Royer-Collard, Ormizon bade her good-night.

"Eh, comment?" she cried. "Oh, bi'n! Bonsoir, et merci pour une soirée très amusante."

In his own room he covered his face with his hands, and moaned aloud:

"Oh, what a low, miserable brute you are! Oh, how I loathe you! How weak you are—how base—how contemptible! If I could but recall this evening—undo it—blot it out! I—I have been disloyal to her. How shall I ever dare to look her in the face again? I have contaminated myself. I am not fit to breathe the same air that she breathes. How can I hope to win her now? I deserve—yes, I *deserve* to lose her. The idea! That she should love a low, weak thing like me! Oh, God! Oh, God forgive me!"

What had he done? He had given Mademoiselle Célestine a better dinner than she was accustomed to, and had afforded her a couple of hours of harmless entertainment at the Hippodrome. But, if he had committed a sneak theft, he could not have despised himself more bitterly; if he had committed a murder, he could not have repented it more passionately. Sickened by his

memory of the thing, tortured by his remorse as by a coal of fire burning in his breast, he passed a most miserable night.

“ Yet, if I had not loved her so,” he cried, “ I never should have done it. How strange ! how strange ! ”

VII.

Tuesday morning, along with his coffee, Désiré, the garçon, brought him a letter. Its superscription was in a handwriting which he had never seen but once before, yet which he recognized at a single glance. The sight of it now did not by any means leave him unmoved ; nay, indeed, it occasioned a very singular aberration in the action of his heart, causing that organ simultaneously to leap and to sink. To leap, for obvious reasons : the letter came from *her*. To sink, because in connection with it a hideous thought flashed upon his mind. Why should she be writing to him, unless something had happened to interfere with the arrangements that they had perfected together at their conference yesterday ? If affairs remained in *statu quo*, this missive was unnecessary and inexplicable.

“ Oh, yes ; I suppose she has written to inform me that the doctor had a previous engagement, or

—or I don't know what—and that they can not go. Just my confounded luck ! ”

For a while he held the envelope intact in his hand, and stared at it with a countenance that was at the same time savage and caressing. At last, muttering, “ Well, here goes,” he tore it roughly open. He closed his eyes for a moment, and sought to muster his courage. “ Well, there's no use playing the ostrich. Here's my fate confronting me. I've got to grin and bear it. It won't mend matters to procrastinate,” he said, finally, and, with the composure of despair, proceeded to read :

“ Monday Afternoon.

“ DEAR MR. ORMIZON,—Isabel wishes me to ask, will you not come to take dinner with us to-morrow (Tuesday) evening, before the theater? In order that we may have plenty of time, we shall dine early—at six o'clock. She has set her heart upon having you come, and I hope you are not going to disappoint her. Have you read any Browning yet ?

“ Sincerely yours,

“ DENISE PERSONETTE.”

Of course the reaction was instantaneous and excessive. At first he could scarcely credit his eyesight ; but a second perusal left no room for doubt. He carried the paper to his lips and kissed

it rapturously. He danced about his chamber in an ecstasy, humming a merry tune, like a child with a new toy. He apostrophized himself: "Well, you *are* a lucky dog! Well, you'd *better* thank your stars! Well, by Jupiter!" He took on generally in a very ridiculous, exuberant, boyish manner. By and by he sat down at his table to indite an acceptance.

"DEAR MADEMOISELLE DENISE—"

No. That wouldn't do. That was too familiar. He tore the sheet up, and began anew:

"DEAR MADEMOISELLE PERSONETTE,—Your note has given me greater pleasure than I can say; and I shall certainly be on hand promptly at six. Meantime, I shall try to alleviate my impatience by reading Browning, which, I blush to own, I have not yet done.

"Please express my very best thanks and compliments to the doctor, and believe me,

"Yours always,

"STEPHEN ORMIZON."

But after he had sealed this communication, and addressed it, he hesitated.

"They ought not to be inviting me to dinner," he reflected. "They can't afford it. And I ought not to accept their invitation. . . . Yet I don't exactly see how I can decline it, without

hurting their feelings. And besides—besides, it would be such jolly good fun. I suppose it would be awfully bad form for me to—so to speak—to turn the tables, and ask them to dine with *me*. Yes, I'm afraid it would. Still, they—they're not sticklers for the ceremonies ; and if I employed tact—if I made the proposition gracefully—it might not do any harm. Well, I guess—I guess I'll risk it. Yes, I absolutely mustn't let them spend their money dining and wining me."

With which he commenced a third note to Denise :

"DEAR MADEMOISELLE PERSONETTE :—It was quite odd that you should have sent me the very kind note which I have just received, and for which I beg you and the doctor to accept my warmest thanks. It was odd, because at the very moment when it was handed to me, I was getting out my paper to scratch off a line to you. The temptation is now strong upon me to leave what I was about to say unsaid. Still, your judgment is better than mine, and perhaps I may as well submit the matter for your consideration. Of course I shall abide by your decision. Well, then, I was on the point of writing to tell you that if you and the doctor would do me the honor of dining with me this evening at the Foyot, you would make me very happy. Now, as I say, I leave the question in your hands. To be your guest, or to be your

host ; it is a choice of felicities which I have not the strength of mind to make.

“ The messenger will bring your answer.

“ Yours always,

“ STEPHEN ORMIZON.”

He leaned out of his window, and hailed the commissionnaire who had his stand on the curbstone below. By the hands of this functionary he dispatched his questionable message.

He waited in a state of wretched uncertainty for her reply. He had written very stiffly, very feebly, he felt ; and perhaps she would be offended. In somewhat less than a quarter-hour the commissionnaire returned. But this time the handwriting was not Denise's :

“ DEAR MR. ORMIZON :—Denise, having to hurry off to a lesson, asked me to answer your note. I know you'll be broken-hearted, but I can't help it. My handwriting is not so pretty as hers, I am well aware ; but it is legible, and will in the present case answer for all practical, if not for all sentimental, purposes.

“ Eh bien ! do you know, sir, that you are most imprudent to trust ‘ a choice of felicities ’ (that phrase is immense ; where did you strike it ?), so grave as the one you mention, to a young and impetuous damsel like Denise ? This is a text upon which I could develop a long homily ; but, as the facteur is waiting, I forbear. Denise has cast the

‘choice’ in favor of Foyot. Which goes to indicate that she has the making of a gourmet in her ; upon which indication, my young friend, reflect.

“ Finally, shall we meet you at the restaurant, or will you call for us ?

“ En tout cas, monsieur, agréez l’assurance de ma plus haute considération.

“ Toujours à vous,

“ ISABEL B. GLUCK.”

“ Wait an instant,” he said to the messenger.

Then he scribbled,—

“ DEAR DOCTOR :—Thanks infinitely. I will call for you at a quarter before six. Meantime, I am

“ Yours faithfully,

“ S. O.”

Which finished the business.

In the course of their dinner, he said to Denise :
“ That volume of Browning you lent me—I have been reading it all day long.”

“ Oh, have you ? Well ? ”

“ It was a revelation to me. I had never known anything like it. I found, when I had once taken the book up, I could not put it down. It was as absorbing—it was more absorbing than a novel.”

“ Which of the poems did you read ? ”

“ Well, I began with *Fra Lippo Lippi*.”

“ Ah, that is one of the very best.”

L. of C.

"It is? Well, I should have supposed so. At least, I shouldn't suppose it would be easy to surpass it. It's beyond praise. Goethe himself might have been proud to have written it. It has so much human nature in it, so much wit, so much humor, in addition to its lofty, noble poetry. Then, aside from its other splendid qualities, it contains the clearest, the most scientific statement of the true philosophy of æsthetics that I have ever seen. I—I was absolutely carried away by it."

"Oh, I was sure you would be. Nobody could read Browning understandingly, and not be. He is irresistible. Well, and after *Fra Lippo*?"

"After *Fra Lippo* I attacked *Bishop Blougram's Apology*, which, in its way, I liked quite as much. It's the strongest defense that could be made for faith in revealed religion. It beats Butler's *Analogy*, Paley's *Theology*, all hollow, on their own ground."

"I think I must begin to read Browning," said the doctor, "you children rave so about him. That poem about mesmerism, that Denise read the other night—there was a great deal in it."

"Why," Ormizon continued, "there are a dozen lines or so in *Blougram* that would have made any ordinary poet. You remember, Mademoiselle

Denise, where the bishop says, 'All right. Let us then, declare ourselves agnostics, free-thinkers, what you will, forthwith,' and then goes on,

'Where's

The gain? how can we guard our unbelief,
Make it bear fruit to us?—the problem here.
Just when we are safest, there's a sunset touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides,
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears,
As old and new at once as nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
Round the ancient idol, on his base again—
The grand Perhaps!'

I don't know when I have read anything so beautiful, anything so inspiring, anything so true. He speaks right out of the depths of human experience."

"Yes, it's very fine," acquiesced the doctor.

"Oh, it is glorious!" cried Denise. "It is thrilling. I am so glad you think as I do, Mr. Ormizon."

"I am thankful to you, mademoiselle, for having put me in the way of thinking as you do. I'm going to study Browning systematically now. This afternoon I ordered his complete works at Galignani's."

"And yet," exclaimed Denise, with a scorn that might have withered the laurels on the laureate's

brow, "and yet people will go on talking about Tennyson, and calling him the greatest living English poet! *Oh!*"

"Oh, well, they'll get over that in time," Ormizon said, consolingly.

"On n'est jamais prophète en son pays, ni en son temps," observed the doctor, sententiously. . . .

"How delicious these mushrooms are!"

"Perfectly lovely," agreed Denise.

"It's true, they're not bad," Ormizon admitted.

And then, somehow, it seemed to strike each of them that there had been rather an abrupt descent from the sublime to the commonplace; and spontaneously they broke into a merry laugh at their own expense.

Presently, "I, too, have been enjoying a literary treat, since I saw you, Mr. Ormizon," Denise announced.

"Yes?" he queried. "What was it?"

"I have been reading *A Voice from the Wilderness.*"

"Oh!" he cried, blushing.

"Perhaps you may think I took too great a liberty," she pursued. "But I will tell you how it was. I began to copy the first chapter, and I got so interested that I could not rest until I had read it through and found out how it ended. I thought

you would not mind, seeing that I was going to copy it all. Now, anyway, I have confessed my sin. If you think I was indiscreet, you may scold me."

"Why, what an idea! But of course—you're laughing at me. You know it's a great compliment."

"No; honestly, I feared your displeasure. The temptation, as I have said, was so strong, I could not resist it. Yet, without comprehending precisely why, I did feel as though I had not any right to do anything but copy, without paying attention to the sense. I have been reproaching myself ever since. I was afraid you might be angry. I am *so* relieved. But, as I was going to say—" She paused abruptly.

"Yes?" he questioned.

"Perhaps I ought not to tell you."

"Oh, on the contrary. It's your bounden duty. Tell me, please."

"I dare say you will think me awfully silly."

"Oh, no, I shan't. Go on. I'm dying to hear it."

"Well, I began it yesterday afternoon, and—and I—sat up all night to finish it."

"Did you, really? Why, how could I think that silly? It indicates prodigious wisdom."

“And—and it made me cry so, I have had a headache all day long.”

“Oh !” with an expression, facial and vocal, of exceeding distress. “I’m so sorry ! I—I never meant to make you cry.”

This was said apparently in all ingenuousness and good faith. But his auditors seemed to regard it as a brilliant witticism, or bit of humor. First, Denise began to laugh ; then the doctor speedily followed her example ; while Ormizon, with a blank face, wondered what the joke was.

By and by, sobriety being restored, Denise demanded, “But why *did* you make it end so sadly ?”

“I tried to make it end as I thought it would actually have ended in real life.”

“Why, do you think things generally end badly in real life ?”

“Oh, no ; I don’t mean that. I mean, I tried to observe the laws of cause and effect, and to make the end the natural consequence of what had gone before. I tried to make it end in the manner that the circumstances had rendered inevitable. To my mind, the ending was inevitable from the beginning. Didn’t it seem so to you ? Didn’t the climax seem natural, logical ?”

“Oh, yes, logical enough, natural enough. But

that did not make it any less sad, less disappointing, any easier to bear. And then, another thing : do you yourself really believe what you made Rivington say about the control of matter over mind ? ‘ Among the many dismal truths which modern science has forced upon us, none is more disheartening than this : that the mind, the spiritual part, of man, is not merely intimately related to, but is absolutely dominated by, the material part, his body. A local organic disease may not merely cloud and enfeeble his intellect, but may totally pervert and deprave his moral nature, as numberless instances have proven ; may turn the benevolent man into a misanthrope, the truthful man into a liar ; may supplant love with hatred, refinement with grossness, disinterestedness with self-seeking.’ Do you yourself really believe that, Mr. Ormizon ? ”

Was it not calculated to set any young author’s heart a-palpitating, thus to hear himself quoted verbatim by the loveliest lady of her generation ? So it affected Ormizon’s, at any rate. She punctuated her inquiry by raising her eyes expectantly to his. At the meeting, a new palpitation swept his bosom, and a blush mounted to his forehead. Whereupon, by the strangest of coincidences, Mademoiselle’s damask cheek displayed for an

instant a similar red ensign ; and simultaneously the two pairs of eyes were dropped upon the table-cloth.

“Er—well,” he began, in a matter-of-fact key, returning to her question, “as a general thing, you know, I shouldn’t like to be held responsible for the opinions of my characters. But here, in this special case, it isn’t a matter of opinion ; it’s a matter of statistics. I don’t see how any one can help believing it. As Rivington says, no end of instances prove it. The physicians’ records are full of them. Isn’t that so, doctor?”

“Oh, yes ; that’s so, undoubtedly. But the force of all that is offset by the discoveries that are being made by the Society for Psychical Research. Their experiments have conclusively demonstrated that, while ordinarily the mind is unquestionably subject to the body, under certain conditions the mind becomes absolutely independent of the body, transcending all the limitations of matter, and of time and space. Still, it can’t be denied that very frequently, as you say, a physical lesion may result in a radical change of the patient’s character and disposition.”

“Oh, but that is so horrible !” cried Denise, “It never occurred to me before. But if it is true—*oh-h-h !* It makes one shudder. But I think

your—what would you call it?—not plot, exactly—your idea—your theme—I think that was beautiful. To have him long so ardently to believe in God and immortality ; and yet all the time be dragged, forced, further and further, deeper and deeper, into materialism, pessimism, cynicism, and all that ; and then, suddenly, forget everything, escape from all his doubts and fears, and find perfect peace and happiness in love. But why—*why* did you let her die ? ”

“ Well, as I said, I thought under the circumstances her death was inevitable. But then, besides, I wanted him to realize that love isn’t enough ; that at best it is only a temporary refuge ; that it can’t permanently fill the place of religion. I wanted him to discover that the same grim, awful, relentless problems were still there, standing where he had left them, outside his lady’s chamber, waiting to confront him at his exit. After she died, you know, his old longings, his old doubts and perplexities, hopes and fears, came surging upon him with more tremendous force than ever.”

“ Yes, I see. But it is dreadfully hard on the reader. You made her so lovely and beautiful ; and then to have her die,—oh, it—it was like losing one of one’s own friends, almost. I thought

I should *never* stop crying. Oh, I really do not think it is fair to your reader to make your book end badly. Do you, Isabel?"

"Well, I don't know about that," returned the doctor. "That's a question of first principles, and would admit of a good deal of debate.. But there's one thing I do know, surely; and that is, if we don't start right away, we'll be late for the play."

Ormizon looked at his watch.

"By Jove," he ejaculated, "that's a fact. Well, I declare, how the time has flown!"

They hurriedly wound up their dinner, and left the restaurant. Outside, they took a cab. Ormizon helped in the ladies, and was then about to establish himself upon the little narrow front seat, facing them, when Dr. Gluck protested:

"No, no, now. We're not going to let you sit cramped up over there. It isn't at all necessary. There's lots of room here between us. Isn't there, Denise?"

"Oh, yes; lots," concurred Denise.

"Oh, I can't think of crowding you ladies," he rejoined. "I shall be perfectly comfortably here—on the strapentin."

"But you *won't* crowd us. Just *look*," cried the doctor, edging over toward one side, while Denise

drew in toward the other. "Don't you *see*? There are oceans of room here. And we *should* feel so uneasy to see you all doubled up over there. Shouldn't we, Denise? Come ; do be nice, now, and do what we ask."

So he sandwiched himself in between the ladies, and throughout the drive enjoyed the blissful consciousness of Denise's arm touching his own.

They reached the theater just as the curtain was going up.

Denise and Dr. Gluck sat forward in the *baig-noire*, and concentrated their attention upon the stage. He sat behind them, in the dark, and concentrated his attention upon Denise. It was a keen delight, thus, without let or hindrance, to be permitted to feast his eyes upon her. Far more interesting than the comedy in progress beyond the footlights, he found the play of expression visible in her face and person. Now she would bend eagerly forward, lips parted, breath bated, eyes wide open, intent upon some decisive episode, anxiously watching for its *dénouement* ; then she would lean back in her chair, and draw a deep sigh of relief, or smile at the humor, or laugh at the absurdity of it, turning to the doctor for sympathy in her emotion. The *bêtises* of Monsieur Perrichon afforded her infinite amusement ; but she took the

sentimental business very seriously, following the devious course of the love affair with rapt attention, and now and then allowing to escape her a soft little "Mon Dieu !" or "Bon !" When the curtain dropped upon the first act, she clapped her hands with much enthusiasm ; after which she turned around to Ormizon, and gave utterance to all her accumulated enjoyment in an impulsive little monosyllable : "*Oh !*"

During the interlude they walked about the foyer ; and for the first time in his life he experienced the delicious sensation of having Denise lean upon his arm.

When the play was over, and they left the theater, he, of course, was for taking a cab home. But the doctor would not hear of it.

"It was all right to take a cab coming," she explained, "because we were in a hurry. But we're not in the slightest hurry now ; and the omnibus is plenty good enough. Isn't it, Denise ?"

"Plenty," Denise responded.

So with the omnibus he had to put up. In the end he was not sorry ; for it fell out that he and Denise sat side by side, with the doctor opposite ; and thus, as the roar of the wheels drowned their voices to third persons, he and she were enabled to indulge in the following confidential conversation:

"I have had *such* a good time, Mr. Ormizon."

"Have you, really? I'm very glad. So have I."

Now, this may not seem like very much of a conversation to the reader ; but it set our hero's heart into a wondrous flutter. For Denise employed a low, intimate, earnest tone of voice ; and besides, in speaking, she brought her lips pretty close to his ear ; and—oh, joy !—for an instant he felt her warm, soft breath upon his cheek !

VIII.

On the morning after *Monsieur Perrichon*, Stephen Ormizon wrote a long letter to his mother. Certain paragraphs toward the end of it read as follows :

"And now, my dearest mother, I have something to tell you, which is of very grave importance. It is something which I feel I ought to tell you, yet which I am afraid you will not like. Yes, I am afraid it will give you great pain. In fact, I know it will. But I think it would be wrong for me to conceal it from you, nevertheless. I think I owe a frank confession of it both to you and to myself. Much as it will displease you, I am sure that in the long run both you and I would suffer more if I should fail to make a clean breast of it at once. So now I will try to state the whole business

to you as clearly as I can. In advance, I beg of you to give me a fair hearing. Read what I have to say through. Don't get angry, and throw it aside, or tear it up.

“ Well, then, this Mademoiselle Personette whom I have told you so much about—whom I have described to you as so good, so intelligent, so beautiful—and who lives with our friend Dr. Gluck in the Rue Soufflot—well, in the few days of our acquaintance I have grown to love her with all my heart and soul. Don't for an instant, mother, don't imagine that my feeling for her is any mere passing caprice or fancy, which I shall get over. You would only be uselessly deceiving yourself. You may as well make up your mind right away to this : my love for Mademoiselle Personette is the serious love of a man for the woman in whom he discerns those qualities which he knows his own nature will need in his wife. I love her so much that I would be willing to give up everything else in the world, to the end of winning her ; so much that, if I fail in winning her, life will have lost all its value and charm for me, and I would be glad to die. Whether she cares anything for me, or not ; whether there is the least likelihood that she will ever care anything for me, of course I do not know. Sometimes I very much fear that she doesn't, and never will. At other times I am more hopeful. Anyhow, it doesn't matter one way or the other for the purposes of this letter. The point I wish to speak with you now about is this.

“Before I left New York last October, you told me—what, of course, I had as good as known for years—that it was the one paramount desire of your heart that I should marry Fanny—as soon as I got ready to settle down and marry any one at all. You said that Fanny, on her side, had agreed to have me; and you asked me to promise to do in this matter as you wished. In my unwisdom—for, if I had been less unwise, I should have answered very differently—in my unwisdom, not in the least realizing the meaning of what I did, not stopping to appreciate the gravity of the obligation which I undertook, I answered that, although I did not *love* Fanny at all, I did love you, and would therefore, for your sake, promise to make her my wife. I might have gone further, and said that, so far from loving her, I did not even like her; I did not even believe in her; that, with her assertive piety and self-righteousness, she was even positively obnoxious to me. But I knew that this would grieve you; I could not see that it would do any good: so I held my tongue. On the understanding, then, that I would consider myself betrothed to Fanny, I left you and came abroad.

“Well, as I say, if I had been wiser—as wise as I am now—I never should have dreamed of making such a promise. In the first place, I should have foreseen this chance of my some time meeting another woman whom I could really love. In the next place, I should have understood that to marry a woman whom you do not love, is to do not only

yourself, but *her*, a great and irreparable wrong ; is to bind her and yourself in a monstrous form of slavery, from which there is no escape but death. Altogether apart from the fact that I am in love with another woman ; even if I were not in love with anybody ; leaving myself out of the question entirely ; in the light of my more mature intelligence, I honestly think that it would be a violation of every right principle of morality and of religion for any man, under any circumstances, to enter into the peculiarly holy state of matrimony with a woman whom he did not love, in the full sense of the word love. That is my honest conviction, looking at the question from an absolutely impersonal point of view. Very well ; how much more immoral and irreligious would it be for a man to marry one woman, when he actually is in love with another ! Then, if the other woman loves him in return, there are her feelings, there is her life-long happiness, to be considered, too. These views which I express this way are commonplaces, platitudes. But the living truth that resides in them I never realized until I found myself in love with Denise. Commonplaces, platitudes, however, though they be, you certainly can not have realized their truth, or you would never have exacted that promise from me. Even now, I dare say, you will be disinclined to admit their truth. But I will venture to say that if you should put this question before any intelligent, high-minded, unprejudiced man, he would agree with me.

“Well, now, to come back to our own case. I shrink from occasioning you any pain or disappointment ; I don’t want to be selfish or undutiful ; I do want to do that which is really right and just. If I could convince myself that it would be right and just for me to renounce Mademoiselle Personette, and come home and marry Fanny, much as the sacrifice would cost me, I believe I would do it. But I cannot so convince myself. On the contrary, I am convinced that it is right and just for me to ask you to release me from my engagement with Fanny. I feel that it is right and just to me, to the lady I love, to Fanny, and to *you*. For I am sure of this : that if, feeling as I do, I should marry Fanny, you also would inevitably have to bear a share of the misery that such an unnatural union would cause ; you would have to suffer the consequence of it, along with her and me. Look at the facts : I don’t love Fanny ; I do love Denise Personette. Fanny does not love me—may very likely in the course of time come to love somebody else. Now, I say, for Fanny and me, under these circumstances, to marry, would entail untold unhappiness upon her, upon myself, upon you, upon everybody that was in any way concerned. And therefore, in all tenderness and respect, I beg you to write to me saying that you liberate me from my promise, and giving me your consent to woo Denise.”

He wrote the letter that contained these paragraphs, upon the spur of an impulse. He sealed

it, and committed it to the post, at once—before he had time to consider, to repent. On second thoughts, he did repent. He was sorry that he had not waited a while longer about making his avowal ; sorry that he had not couched that avowal in softer and more persuasive phrases. But he recognized that his repentance was futile ; that the thing was done beyond undoing ; and so, like a sensible fellow, he shrugged his shoulders ; said, well, there was no use crying over spilled milk ; and determined to stifle his regret for the past, and fear of the future, in the delights of the present.

All that day he kept up a debate with himself touching the propriety of his calling upon the ladies of the Rue Soufflot in the evening. He tried hard to convince himself that there was no good reason why he should not yield to his inclination ; but obstinately a still, small voice retorted, “ No, my dear boy, you mustn’t run this thing into the ground. It won’t do. You’ll wear out your welcome if you don’t take care. Besides, you—they’d—they’d get a pretty strong suspicion of what the matter is ; and, I take it, you don’t want to give yourself away yet awhile.”

“ But,” he demanded, “ if I don’t go there, what *shall* I do with myself ? How shall I pass the

time?—forget this craving for the sight of her face? Ah! I have it! I'll call on Lancelot."

So, after his dinner, he made for the Hôtel du St.-Esprit.

The landlady was established in an easy-chair on the sidewalk near the entrance.

"Bonsoir, madame. Monsieur Palmer, is he at home?" he began.

"Monsieur Pahmah?" returned the landlady, looking up, with a blank face. "I do not know him, sir."

"Why, it is a young American painter."

"Ah, perfectly! You wish to say, Monsieur Pal-maire. Ah, monsieur, he is gone out, since a half-hour."

He turned away, disappointed.

It was a deliciously tender summer evening. The breeze, warm and soft, bore a faint, sweet summery smell, and murmured amorously in the listener's ear. The stars shone like a multitude of languishing, passionate eyes. There was distant music in the air. As on that balmy afternoon in the gardens of the Luxembourg, every other young fellow had his Dulcinea clinging to his arm. Just the conditions, meteorological and otherwise, to make a fond heart grow fonder still.

"Oh, hang it," cried Ormizon, "I can't stand

this. I'm going to call on her, I don't care what happens."

And he marched resolutely to her house and up her staircase.

Dr. Gluck opened the door.

"Oh, it's you!" she exclaimed. "It's so fortunate you've come. We were just wishing you might."

"Ah," he responded. "It's very kind of you to say so."

"Yes," she continued, "you see, Lancelot is here, with a plan. We want you to join us in it."

Denise greeted him with a charming little smile, a warm little hand-shake, and a demure little "Good-evening, Mr. Ormizon."

"How d'ye do? How are you?" inquired Lancelot. "How wags the world with you?"

"First-rate, thanks. And now, the plan?"

"Oh, the plan's a simple one," Lancelot informed him. "I was proposing to these ladies that we make up a party and spend next Sunday in the Bois de Meudon. That's all."

"That we go out by an early morning train, and come back in the evening," added the doctor.

"That we get our breakfast and our dinner there, *al fresco*," Denise concluded.

"Well, now, what's your opinion of it?" Lancelot demanded.

"It's a capital idea," Ormizon affirmed. "Only, I would offer this slight amendment. On Sunday, there's always a crowd at Meudon—students, shopkeepers, and such like ; which would be rather disagreeable. So I suggest that we make it Monday instead of Sunday."

"By George," cried Lancelot, "right you are. That never occurred to me ; but it's pregnant with wisdom. Mr. Ormizon, you are the possessor of a remarkable brain. There's a large preponderance of gray matter, and the convolutions are deep."

"Thank you for your kind appreciation," said Ormizon.

"Oh, how droll !" exclaimed Denise.

And she and the doctor went off in one of their explosions of laughter.

"Well, then, Monday it shall be—hey ?" asked Lancelot. "We'll meet at the railway station on Monday at nine o'clock ?"

"Yes," they all assented.

After which, for an hour or so, there was general and desultory conversation.

Finally, "I don't believe you ladies know what a fine night it is," Ormizon observed. "It's a pity

to spend it in-doors. Let's go out and have an ice on the boulevard."

His suggestion was adopted; and the ladies withdrew to put on their bonnets.

Lancelot took advantage of their absence to remark, confidentially, "Say, Ormizon, I hope you won't be offended; but I guess I'll let you and the women-folks go for those ices alone. I guess I'll bid you good-night when we reach the street."

"Why, what an idea! Why should you do that?"

"Well, the fact is, I don't believe I've got money enough on me to pay my share."

"But, man alive, this is my treat. I invite the whole crowd. You can't possibly object to that—just for once. And we'd all feel dreadfully to have you desert us. You'd break up the party."

"Well, I hope you won't think me a sponger, a dead beat."

"Oh, nonsense! It would be a pity if you couldn't ever accept an invitation."

"Well, it's against my principles. But, in the words of Rip Van Winkle, we won't count it this time, hey?"

The doctor and Denise came back.

They walked round to a pâtissier's on the Rue de Vaugirard, opposite the Luxembourg. Of

course they paired off ; Lancelot giving his arm to the doctor, and Ormizon his to Denise.

On the way, in a low and tender voice, "Isn't it a lovely night, mademoiselle?" he inquired.

"Oh, delicious," she replied, "heavenly!—'La brise est douce et parfumée,'"—humming softly the air from "Mireille."

"I don't know," he went on, with the intonation of one making a broad and important generalization, "I don't know that I have ever seen quite so pleasant an evening before."

"I," she said, reflectively, "I have never seen one that was *more* pleasant."

"There is a peculiar softness in the air."

"Yes; and, while it is warm enough, it is not a bit *too* warm."

"No; the temperature seems to be about right. I hope this fine weather is going to last."

"Oh, I hope so. What a pity if it should rain on Monday!"

"Oh, horrible! Perish the thought!"

"Of course one cannot foresee. The weather is so capricious. It may do so."

"Certainly. Still, we—"

"What are you two young folks conspiring about now?" broke in the voice of the doctor, from behind. "You have the appearance of deep

and awful mystery. Come ; Lancelot and I are dying of curiosity."

Thereupon, for the first time, it occurred to Ormizon that they had been talking about the weather. After all, when we are conversing with our lady-love, it isn't the *matter* of our discourse that counts.

Arrived at the pâtissier's, they installed themselves at a table on the sidewalk, where they could get the full benefit of the fresh, racy odors that come from the gardens across the way. Here they sat, consuming ices, and exchanging pleasantries, till about eleven o'clock. When they started for home, they paired off again. But this time there was some grave mismanagement ; for Ormizon discovered that Lancelot and Denise were walking together in front, while he, with the doctor on his arm, brought up the rear.

"Don't you like Lancelot ?" the doctor asked.

"Oh, yes ; he's a very nice fellow," he replied, absently.

"So original ; isn't he ?"

"Yes, very."

"Do you think he's in love with her ?"

"With De—with Mademoiselle Personette ? Oh, no ; I don't think so."

"They'd mate splendidly, though ; wouldn't they ?"

"Well, I don't know."

"Yes, I think he'd make an excellent husband for her. But of course, he's so poor, it's out of the question. He couldn't support a wife."

"No ; I suppose not."

"Well, I dare say she'll live to be an old maid, like me. She'll never marry a Frenchman, anyhow."

"Ah ?"

"No. You see, she hasn't any dot."

"Oh !"

"Do you know my private opinion ?"

"No : what is it ?"

"My private opinion is that you are head over ears in love with her."

"Oh—why—oh, what an idea !"

"Oh, there's no use denying it. You can't pull the wool over my eyes. It's as plain as the nose on your face. Well, I don't wonder. I should be, too, if I were a man. You've got a level head."

"I hope, doctor, that you haven't said anything as absurd as this to Mademoiselle Personette."

"Oh, no ; of course I haven't. It's none of my business. And, besides, why should I ? It would only worry her."

"Do—do—do you think—I—stand any chance?"

"Ah, then you admit it ?"

"No. I don't admit anything. I put the question hypothetically."

"Well, then, if you don't admit it, if you merely put the question hypothetically, I don't believe you stand the least ghost of a chance—not the shadow of a shade of a chance."

"Oh, good Lord! Really? Is—is there somebody else? For mercy's sake, don't trifle with me about this. Tell me the whole truth, right out. I—I can stand it."

"Well, really, I don't see why you should care one way or the other—if you deny the soft impeachment."

"Doctor, I will confess to you, in confidence, since you seem already to have divined it, I will confess to you that I love her with all my heart. I adore her. Now, tell me, have I any chance?"

"In confidence, in absolute secrecy, then, I will tell you—"

"Yes—quick!"

"You promise to make no improper use of the information?"

"Yes, yes. For Heaven's sake go on."

"I will tell you, then, that—I haven't the shadow of an idea."

"Oh, Lord!" he groaned. "Oh, you are cruel, to torture a fellow like that!"

"There, there," she said, pressing his arm. "Have patience, have courage. There's nothing absolutely repugnant or hateful about you. I don't see why you shouldn't win her, or any other woman, if you go about it in the right way, and try hard enough. Now, mind you, I don't believe the idea of caring for you has ever entered her head—yet. But I suppose on general principles that her heart is not impregnable. And so I say, be not despondent. I'll tell you one thing, nothing could please me better."

"Thank you, doctor. Then you are my ally?"

"Yes; that is, you have my best wishes."

"*Vous voilà, enfin!*" cried Denise. "Lancelot and I have waited these five minutes. How slow!"

They had reached the house in the Rue Soufflot.

"Well, good-night, messieurs," said the doctor. "And don't forget: Monday at nine o'clock, at the Gare Mont Parnasse."

"That means," thought Ormizon, "that I am not to call upon them between now and Monday morning."

IX.

Somehow the four intervening days dragged their weary length away, and Monday morning

came, warm and clear. Denise and the doctor were already there when Ormizon reached the Gare Mont Parnasse. Ah, the delicious heart-thrill, when she gave him her tiny hand, and lifted her bright brown eyes in welcome upon his face ! She wore a jaunty straw hat, that was exceedingly becoming to her ; and she carried a dainty little black silk parasol, with a handle of curiously carved ivory.

“Ah, here comes Lancelot,” cried the doctor.
“I was afraid he was going to be late.”

“And do *look* at his collar,” added Denise. “I should think it would guillotine him.”

Lancelot came striding up, his coat-tails flying behind him. In his hand he held a long, oblong wooden box, presumably containing sketching-materials. His throat was encircled by a monstrously high standing collar, the points of which met under his chin ; the style of collar that is affected nowadays by young gentleman of fashion when they put on their evening suits. Its effect was decidedly incongruous with the rest of Lancelot's easy attire, especially on this sultry August morning.

“Well, young folks, here we are,” was his greeting. “And now, then, en avance ! Marchons ! All aboard !”

They found an empty second-class compartment, into which they clambered. Next instant the doors were slammed, the bell was rung, the locomotive shrieked; and they were off. Fifteen minutes later, "Meudon, Meudon!" sang out the guards; and they descended.

"Now," said Lancelot, "I take it I express the sentiment of the majority, when I remark that the first thing in order is to seek some refreshment for the inner man. I know a restaurant in the forest, about half an hour's walk from here, where one can feast royally. Let's steer for it without delay."

Trusting themselves to Lancelot's guidance, they began their march—under the solemn old trees, over the soft green moss. Half an hour, three-quarters of an hour, an hour, an hour and a half, elapsed; and still they had not reached the restaurant. Lancelot kept assuring them, "We're almost there." They kept complaining of extreme hunger, and threatening to die of starvation in their tracks.

"Aha!" Lancelot suddenly cried, striking a theatrical attitude. "Oh, ye faithless ones! Ye indefatigable naggers! Behold! The haven of our hopes, the goal of our desires!"

Looking in the direction that he indicated, they

beheld, embowered among the trees, some fifty yards to the right of the road-way, a small wooden house, scarcely more than a shed or a shanty, upon the weather-beaten façade of which, in giant black letters, was emblazoned the following device :

RESTAURANT DE LA CAROTTE D'OR.

ON DONNE À BOIRE ET À MANGER.

ENGLISCH SPOKEN - MAN SPRICHT DEUTCH.

For the restaurant of the golden carrot they made in frantic haste. Under the trees round about were scattered a number of rough rustic tables. One of these they speedily surrounded, and began to rap upon it for the waiter.

"I never *was* so hungry in all my life before," proclaimed Dr. Gluck.

"Nor I." }
 "Nor I." } In chorus from the others.
 "Nor I." }

"Well, now, we must go in for a breakfast that shall deserve a place in history—something at once delicate and substantial, varied and abundant. Mr. Ormizon, you do the ordering. Bring your massive intellect and your fervid imagination to bear upon the task, and effect, if possible, a result that shall satisfy the soul as well as the palate."

"I'll try," said Ormizon, modestly. "Ah, here comes the waiter."

An elderly man, in his shirt-sleeves, smoking a cigar, came shambling up.

"Bonjour, messieurs, mesdames," he greeted them, with the usual Parisian sing-song.

"Bonjour," returned Ormizon. "The bill of fare, if you please."

"Ah, monsieur, we have no bill of fare. Monsieur may command whatever he desires."

"Well, then, let us see. Voyons un peu. . . . Well, we will begin with a melon; a fine one, mark you; ripe to the point. It must be as cold as ice, as sweet as honey. It must melt like sugar upon the tongue, and diffuse its exquisite aroma throughout the senses. You understand?"

"Ah, oui, monsieur. Un beau melon, bien mûr. Et puis?"

"Et puis—and then—well, and then a fried sole. Now, bestow great care upon that sole. She must be as fresh as dew upon the mountains, as crisp as the air of early morning. You may dress her with a sauce of mushrooms, and perfume her with the most delicate conceivable whiff of garlic. After the sole, a bifteck—thick, juicy, red, and tender; served with fried potatoes and string-beans. Finally, fruit, cheese, and coffee. Let that

coffee be divorced from chicory. Make it as black as night, as bitter as sorrow. And now, as to wine. Well, we'll be moderate in the matter of wine. Bring us a couple of bottles of St. Emilion. There ; that's all. But mind : we are excessively difficult, we others, and shall expect great things of you. We want this breakfast to be a unique affair, a chef-d'œuvre."

"Ah, oui, monsieur ; have no fear. Our kitchen is known in all the country," replied the old waiter, and shambled off.

"That's a fact," added Lancelot. "They have a great reputation ; and I think we may trust them for a first-rate meal."

"It made my mouth water just to hear you name those good things," said the doctor ; "especially the sole."

"And mine, too," said Denise ; "especially the melon. This is just the sort of morning for a fresh, cool melon."

"And mine, too," said Lancelot ; "especially the bifteck. I hope it'll be a big one, and I hope they'll hurry up."

"But why did you omit a salad ?" asked the doctor. "I think a salad would be just the thing."

"Oh, to be sure. I forgot it. I'll order one at once. Hello ; here's our venerable friend return-

ing now. I say, garçon, I forgot to tell you that we should need a salad, also. A romaine, if you've got one, with a plain dressing and a chapon."

"Hélas, monsieur," the old waiter began, "we are desolated. We offer to messieurs, mesdames, all our excuses. But it appears, monsieur—"

"Yes? Well?"

"It appears that the crowd of yesterday—ah, monsieur, il y avait tant de monde!—that all our provisions have been consumed. You see, monsieur, Sunday is our day. On Monday, above all, we do not attend of the world, and unhappily we are not prepared. Those of yesterday have left, in fact, but two bottles of wine—a good wine of Bordeaux, it is true—one bread, and sixteen eggs. That is all, messieurs, mesdames."

It would be difficult to convey an adequate idea of the consternation which this speech produced among our famished friends.

"Bon dieu!" cried Denise.

"Gracious me!" cried the doctor.

Lancelot spake not; but he turned as white—as white as the redoubtable collar that bound his throat.

Ormizon was the first to recover a little his presence of mind:

"Well, this is really awful, you know; there's no

two ways about it. Still, we must bear up under it. We musn't allow ourselves to be crushed. Grin and bear it ; never say die ; don't give up the ship, you know ; and all that. Maybe it's not so bad as it looks. Perhaps—wait ; I'll ask him." Addressing the garçon, "Is there another restaurant anywhere near here?" he demanded.

"Oh, yes, monsieur ; a very good one, in the village."

"In the village ! None nearer ? How long would it take us to reach it ?"

"No, monsieur, none nearer. It would require perhaps two hours of walking."

"Two hours !" exclaimed Denise, aghast. Her emotion overcame her. She pronounced it, as French people will, when they are strongly moved, "Two hhours !"

"Oh, that's out of the question. It's not to be thought of," cut in the doctor. "We should never survive the journey."

"Never," concurred Lancelot ; "at least, not the six hundred. I don't believe I could drag myself a dozen yards. No ; the only thing to do is to put up with what they can give us here. Sixteen eggs—well, that makes four apiece ; and they say there's lots of nourishment in eggs. Then the bread and the wine,—oh, we shan't actually starve.

We'll contrive to keep soul and body together—
Dites donc, garçon : tell your cook to make an
omelette of those sixteen eggs—an omelette aux
fines herbes, if you have any estragon and ciboule.
Serve that with your bread and your wine ; and,
above all, be quick about it ; make haste ; for we
die of hunger.”

They waited in rather a dismal silence till the old
man came back with the things ; whereupon im-
mediately they fell to, and, still in silence,—for
they were too seriously hungry to enliven the re-
past with talk,—consumed omelette and bread, till
not a vestige was left of either. Then Lancelot
leaned back, and drew a deep breath, and declared,
well, he felt somewhat better.

“Tenez,” cried Denis. “What is this that he
brings ? ”

The old waiter drew near, bearing an immense
bowl of salad.

“While messieurs, mesdames, were occupied
with their omelette, I have entered the fields there
below, and gathered this quantity of doucette,”
he explained ; “of which we have made a sal-
ad. We dare to hope that it may compensate a
little to messieurs, mesdames, for the frugality of
their breakfast.”

Their joy was too deep for utterance. They

attacked the *doucette* vigorously ; nor did they rest till the last leaf had disappeared. It was an excellent salad, moreover, with just the right proportion of oil and the proper suggestion of garlic. What with the wine that they had imbibed, they were by this time quite refreshed and cheerful. Their spirits mounted ; their tongues loosened.

"After all," reflected the doctor, "we might have gone further and fared worse. For my part, I'm perfectly contented."

"For me," affirmed Denise, "I think it was great fun. It was an experience."

"It was very jolly and romantic," Ormizon said.

"Well, you folks are easily satisfied," observed Lancelot. "But I—I own I'm haunted by the thought of that *bifteck*—thick, juicy, red, tender—which our friend Ormizon here so eloquently described. It was a great, a noble, an heroic conception. Alas that it should have failed of execution !"

"Why, I declare, here come the old waiter again !" cried the doctor.

"Oh, let us trust that he has discovered something more to eat," Lancelot ejaculated, with the fervor of prayer.

"Why—why, look—don't you see ?—he's got a violin," pursued Dr. Gluck.

"Oh, Lord ! That's a fact," groaned Lancelot. "We can't eat a fiddle."

"Perhaps," questioned the old man, "messieurs, mesdames, would like to amuse themselves a little ? I can play the waltz, the polka, the galop—what you will. I put myself at the command of messieurs, mesdames."

"Oh, a dance, a dance, by all means," was the unanimous response.

In a twinkling they were whirling in a swift waltz over the mossy earth, while the old man lashed the strings of his instrument till they shrieked for mercy. Ormizon, clasping Denise's waist, and holding her little warm hand in his, blessed from the bottom of his soul the inspiration that had possessed the aged waiter, and determined to reward that functionary with a *pourboire* that should make his eyes open. Lancelot's coat-tails illustrated the principle of centrifugal force by standing out horizontally behind him. Round and round the dancers spun until, breathless and exhausted, for sheer fatigue they sank upon the ground. Lancelot panted like a race-horse at the finish ; and the perspiration poured in streams from his forehead, down his cheek, and over his tower-like collar ; which however, appeared impervious to the moisture, retaining its pristine gloss

and consistency. Suddenly he started up, crying, "By George! As sure as I'm alive, there are poppies growing in that meadow over yonder. Don't you see those points of scarlet? Excuse me for a jiffy." And off he went poppy-hunting.

During his absence, "Did you notice his collar?" Denise inquired, in a low, awed tone.

"Yes; it didn't wilt, or anything. It passes my comprehension," said the doctor.

"Wonderful," admitted Ormizon.

"There's something weird and uncanny about it," Dr. Gluck went on. "Let's make him explain it."

"Yes; it's like sorcery," added Denise. "*Ça vous fait peur.*"

"Here he comes back. Now, Mr. Ormizon, we appoint you a committee to probe this mystery to its bottom. I shan't be easy till we have discovered the solution of it."

Lancelot returned, the richer for a good-sized bunch of poppies, which he divided between the ladies. Denise fastened one of the flame-red flowers in her hair, behind her ear, where it produced an effect very Spanish, picturesque, and charming.

"Lancelot," Ormizon began solemnly, "I have been commissioned by these gentle but inquisitive

friends of ours to request of you certain information. From the moment of your advent among us this morning, we have been tremendously impressed by your collar. Its luster, its altitude, the grace and the dignity of its architecture, have not, I assure you, been lost upon us ; nor have the consummate ease and thoroughbred insouciance with which you have supported it. The emotions that it inspired, however, deepened into astonishment, not unmingled with fear, when we beheld how staunchly it withstood the consequences of your waltzing. Now, with all due respect, we are anxious to learn what the secret of it is : its history, its chemistry, all about it."

"Why, certainly," replied Lancelot. "Happy to accommodate you, I'm sure. This collar is what I call my dude collar. I got it to wear when I went into society. I'm glad you folks have appreciated it. The secret of it ? Why, children, you're years behind the times. This collar is made of what the French call *linge américain*—in simple English, celluloid."

Whereupon they had a good laugh all around.

"Well, come ; don't let's stay here forever," the doctor said. "Let's go for a ramble in the forest."

They rambled about the forest till late that afternoon. Whenever they stopped to rest, Lancelot

got out his paints, and improved the opportunity to make a sketch ; while they grouped themselves behind him, and watched the progress of his brush, or gave him the benefit of their intelligent comments and suggestions. "I'd deepen that shadow a little, if I were you, Lancelot"—"A little more yellow in that sunshine"—"Yes, he's caught that cloud-effect very well"—"Not quite enough warmth in his middle distance, though," etc., etc. For a long time Lancelot stood it like a Spartan. At last, however, the strain became too great for flesh and blood. He started up, and, with a low bow, offered his palette and his brushes to Ormizon, saying, "I tell you what. You just go ahead and finish it, will you? There's a good fellow. And show us how it *should* be." After that they let the poor painter hammer out his own salvation, unassisted. There was no pairing off to-day, alas ! though Ormizon kept picturing to himself the felicity that would be his, if he and Denise could but wander off alone together, down one of those stately, grass-grown avenues, under the great trees, away, away, into the pearly haze at the horizon. It seemed to him there could be no spot on earth more appropriate to love-making than this fine old forest of Meudon ; and yet—and yet, there were the doctor and Lancelot so close at their heels that

he and Denise couldn't so much as say yes or no to each other without being overheard. Nevertheless, to saunter at her side, to carry her parasol, to listen to her laughter, to gaze into the starry depths of her eyes—that was something ; that was not to be despised. “Oh, how beautiful she looks,” he thought, “so poetic and interesting, with that scarlet poppy behind her ear, and the landscape for a background ! If I had only plucked it, and given it to her, instead of Lancelot ! By Jove, if—if I had never cared for her before, I should fall in love with her to-day.” It may be asserted generally that in the country, as in the spring, a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of a sentimental nature. There is something about the quiet, the solitude, the sweet air, the green grass, the shadowy nooks, the sunlit pathways, the birds, the wild flowers, the whispering breezes, the babbling brooks, etc., etc., that exerts a wonderfully stimulating influence upon all the amorous fibers in a young person's bosom.

They took the five-o'clock train for Paris,—having, in consequence of the emptiness of the larder at the Carotte d'Or, to forego the dinner *à fresco* that they had looked forward to. Arrived in town, they made straight for an *Etablissement Duval* ; and there, I promise you, they commanded

such a banquet as more than satisfied even the insatiable Lancelot. Ormizon has repeated the menu to me : consommé, filet de sole, ris de veau aux petits pois, rosbif aux champignons, haricots verts, artichauts à l'huile, framboises et fromage de crème, abricots, café, cognac. 'Twas well they had healthy appetites and good digestions. Their conversation, as they sat around the table, turned upon Dr. Gluck's hobbies, psychical research and spiritualism. She told in a graphic and rather blood-curdling style of many of her own experiences ; how she had seen chairs walk unaided about a room, how she had shaken hands and held creepy consultations with materialized visitants from the other world, and so on ; and succeeded in working up the interest of her auditors to a high degree. In the end she proposed that they should all spend the evening in the Rue Soufflot and try their luck at table-turning ; a proposition to which they readily assented.

Acting under the doctor's generalship, they cleared off the books and things upon the center-table in the salon ; and then they sat down around it, resting their finger-tips lightly upon the top near the edge. It was an unsubstantial table of wood, perhaps three feet square, and weighing not more than ten pounds at the utmost

"Now," said the doctor, "we must all touch hands. This way. See? Stretch out your little fingers, and touch those of your neighbors both to right and left, so as to form a circle."

Ormizon liked this. It was very pleasant to keep his little finger in constant contact with Denise's.

The room was lighted by a single candle. The doctor explained that the spirits wouldn't come if there was a bright light.

"May we talk?" Lancelot asked.

"No; I guess we'd better not," replied the doctor. "Music is generally regarded as a favorable condition. But talk would be likely to keep them away."

Lancelot began to whistle. "We won't go home till morning," was the tune he selected.

"Oh! Please! You don't call that music, do you?" cried the doctor.

He cut the melody short; and they remained in silence for some ten or fifteen minutes. The table had thus far shown no disposition to cast off its inertia. But stay—suddenly—what was this?

A distinct vibration was perceptible in it. It trembled. It shook. It swayed energetically from side to side. Then it stopped, and was quiet again.

"Oh! Oh-h-h!" murmured Denise, scarcely louder than a whisper. "I am so afraid!"

"Sh-sh! There's nothing to be afraid of," whispered the doctor. "This is splendid."

Neither of the young men made any sign.

The table now remained motionless for it may have been a minute; at the end of which period it began, very slowly, to tip upward in the direction of Ormizon, and downward in the direction of Lancelot, who was facing him. It kept its balance in this position for a few seconds, when it slowly returned to its natural place.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Lancelot.

"You know," said the doctor, "three raps mean yes; two raps mean no. Now I'm going to ask. . . Is—there—a—spirit—present?" she demanded, making each syllable very loud and clear, and pausing after each word.

Slowly the table tipped upward, and descended with a rap upon the floor, three times: yes!

"Oh, do not, do not let us go on," pleaded Denise. "This is horrible."

"Hush—*hush!*" the doctor implored her. "They'll go away if you talk like that. Now I'm going to ask its name. You know, I will repeat the alphabet; and when the right letter is reached the table will rap. Then some one must write that

letter down ; and I'll begin the alphabet again, and it will rap at the second letter ; and so on to the end. This is a pretty slow process, but it's about the only practical one I know of.—Now, who's got a pencil ? Ah, thank you, Lancelot. All right There ; now I'll repeat the alphabet ; and you, Mr. Ormizon, you write down the letters. . . . Will — you — spell — out — your — name ? ” — addressing the spirit.

Three raps.

“ Very well. . . . A—b—c—d—e—” She continued as far as T, at which point the table rapped. Ormizon wrote T upon his paper ; and the doctor began anew, “ A—b—c—” etc., till O was reached, when again the table rapped, and again she started, “ A—b—c—”

It *was* a slow process. So much time elapsed between each letter and its successor that nobody remembered those that had gone before. By and by, after having bumped the floor at D, the table rapped thrice—which, the doctor said, meant that the spelling was concluded.

“ Well, what is its name ? ” they all queried eagerly of Ormizon.

He handed the paper to Dr. Gluck.

“ Well,” she said, with great solemnity, “ the letters are all written out in a line, without being

divided. Let me see. T—O—M—M—Y—
T—O—D—D—Tom—Tommy—Tommy Todd."

Lancelot burst into a wild guffaw. Ormizon followed his example. Denise laughed, too ; but her laughter was nervous, her amusement evidently being tempered by fear.

The doctor alone preserved her gravity. "What are you laughing at?" she inquired.

"Tommy Todd!" shrieked Lancelot. "Tommy Todd!" And his laughter shook him from head to foot.

"It *is* an odd name—for a spirit," the doctor admitted. "They often do have very odd names indeed. But you mustn't laugh that way. He'll take offense, and go off. Come! Be serious. I want to see whether we can get a communication."

Lancelot controlled his mirth.

The doctor asked, "Have—you—a—communication—for—any—person—here?"

Three raps.

"For whom? . . . Now write, Mr. Ormizon. . . . A—b—c—"

After the doctor had repeated pretty nearly the entire alphabet three times running, the monosyllable "you" was found written upon Ormizon's paper.

"Me?" she queried.

The table rapped in the affirmative.

"Oh, isn't this exciting!" she cried, all aglow with expectancy and pleasure. "Isn't this splendid!"

For the next five or ten minutes she was kept busy saying her a-b-c's. In the end the communication proved to be :

"You needn't holler so at me. I ain't deaf."

Lancelot had another convulsion.

The doctor's physiognomy expressed her sorrow, her disappointment. Making the best of it, however, she demanded, in a subdued voice, "Is—that—all?"

"No," the table answered, rapping twice.

"All right. . . . A—b—c—"

This communication was a lengthy one. But by and by, after an eternity of spelling, it was complete :

"Wall, I vum! You say your letters fuss-rate. Where ju learn um? I am a weird, clammy, cross-eyed crittur. Ugh! E pluribus unum. Three cheers for Mary, three for the lamb. I am thy father's ghost. Hooray!"

The punctuation was the result of a joint effort on the part of the doctor and Ormizon.

"Oh, pshaw!" sighed the doctor. "How provoking!"

"Oh, what nonsense!" cried Denise. "Some one is cheating. It is—I am sure it is Mr. Ormizon."

"No; on my word of honor," protested Ormizon, "I am as innocent as you are yourself."

"Oh, no; nobody is cheating," said the doctor. "They often do send these absurd messages. It is supposed to be due to some imperfection in the conditions. . . . Well—is—that—all?"

"Tap—tap—tap," replied the table.

"Have—you—a—communication — for—any—other—person—here?"

"Tap—tap—tap."

"For—whom? A—b—c—"

The result was: "Denise."

"Oh, no!" Denise exclaimed, starting up. "I do not wish to receive any communication. No; this is too horrible. Please—I beg of you—let us stop it. I know I shall not be able to sleep a wink all night, if we go on. Please, Isabel, let us stop at once. It is so—*oh-h!*"

"Oh, dear, dear!" sighed the doctor. "What a pity! Just when we were getting started so splendidly, to have to discontinue! We may never have such a chance again. However, since it frightens Denise, we must not go on. Dear, dear!"

So they left the table.

The doctor began to discuss what had happened in a very learned and scientific style. The others listened gravely enough, till all at once, "Tommy Todd!" cried Lancelot, slapping his leg, and had a more frantic attack of laughter than before. Ormizon and Denise joined him. At this Dr. Gluck became indignant. "Well, really," she declared, with great asperity, "I must say I think you are very frivolous and absurd."

When the young men were starting to take their leave, "Well," began Lancelot, "I hate to dissipate your fond illusions, doctor, but I feel that it is only fair for me to confess that I did it."

"Did it? Did what?" questioned the doctor.

"Why, tipped the table. I, alone and unassisted, with my own right hand, performed those prodigious feats which an ill-advised modesty induced me to attribute to Thomas Todd."

"What! Oh, you—you—!" cried the doctor, choking with anger. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself. I—I'll never forgive you—*never!*"

"Oh, thank you for owning up, Lancelot. I am so glad, so relieved," said Denise.

"Honestly, it was awfully mean of you," went on the doctor. "Such monkey-shines! It proves that you have no serious interest in science. Well, good-night."

X.

Ormizon, as we know, was to sail for New York on the 26th of September. He had engaged his passage for that date aboard the steamship *La Touraine*, from Havre. He had done this, it seemed to him, a million years ago, in a dimly remembered era of obscurity and chaos, when the world was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. He had done it before the flood ; under the old régime ; in his grub period ; ere his soul had burst from its chrysalis and spread its wings. He had done it, that is to say, before he had made the acquaintance of Denise Personette.

But done, nevertheless, it was. The fact remained, like a monument of antiquity that had survived change, conquest, revolution. There in his pocket-book, tangible and legible, lay his ticket, a vestige of his former life, a legacy from his dead self ; not by any means a welcome or pleasing one.

His first blind impulse was to revoke and cancel the whole business ; not merely to put off his departure, but to abandon the notion of departing altogether, and to abide forever where he was—in Paris, with, or at least near, Denise. But of course

a very little sober reflection sufficed to make the wildness and infeasibility of this scheme patent to him. Then he turned back, and began seriously to meditate prolonging his furlough, deferring the day of his farewell. Needless that we should follow the debate he thereupon held within himself. His desire cried, "Ay!" His reason argued, "Nay."

— "What's the use? As long as I've got to go sooner or latter, what good can come of procrastination? The wrench of parting will be all the harder the longer I delay it. And then—besides—my mother. She expects me home; is eager for my return. I owe it to her not to disappoint her. I owe her that much consideration. Add to which—add to which, that if I want her to respect my wishes in this little matter concerning Fanny, it would be most impolitic to start by offending her and getting her into a bad humor. Oh, Lord, yes! I suppose I shall have to stick to the 26th."

After a good deal of vacillation,—for it was constitutional with him to vacillate,—he went over one day to the office of the ship's company, in Rue Scribe, to inquire tentatively what arrangements he might be able to make for a later sailing, should he find himself so disposed. He learned that no berth was to be had earlier than the second Saturday in November.

"Ze rosh of autumn," explained the urbane, English-speaking clerk. "All ze worl' go home. Gran' crowd. No room, unless you take officer's, w'ich cos' you hun'red, hun'red fifty, dollar extra."

That decided him. He could not think of waiting till the middle of November. His mother would be broken-hearted if he failed her at Thanksgiving. He could not afford to pay a hundred dollars extra. Will he, nill he, now he must "stick to the 26th."

"All right," he soliloquized, resigning himself to destiny. "So be it. If—if Denise gives me any encouragement—if she accepts me!—I'll go home, arrange my affairs, pacify my mother, find, if possible, a publisher for my novel, and then—and then come back and marry her! But if—if she gives me the mitten—if I see there's no hope for me—if worse comes to worst—why, then I'll go home and stay, and—oh, and support the misery of existence the best way I can. One thing, though, I won't do, whatever happens. I won't marry Fanny."

From which time forth he endeavored constantly to exile the dread day from his thoughts; to prevent his mind from dwelling upon it; to close his eyes, and, ostrich-like, ignore how steadily, how relentlessly it was approaching.

All the while, naturally, he kept asking himself, "Does she care for me? Is she so much as in a fair way to care for me? Is there the least likelihood that she ever will care for me!"—"Care for me," be it observed; not "love me." Very seldom, even in his own secret pondering of this question, did he use the word love. He dared not. That word was too sacred, too awful. It called up a too vivid and dazzling vision of the thing itself. His feeling about this was not unlike that of the pious Jew, who can not be induced to write or speak the name of God, Jehovah, but substitutes for it a different set of sounds and letters, Adonai.—"Does she care for me? Will she ever care for me?"—Alas, he never could get hold of anything like a final, permanent conclusion. Now, a trifle light as air, a word, a look, a gesture, a mere inflection of the voice, would set him afire with hope, and send him home intoxicated, beside himself with joy, to lie awake all night, nursing his precious memory of the thing in his bosom, and feasting his imagination upon its corollaries. Anon, another word, look, gesture, what not, would plunge him into the darkest pit of despondency and dejection, and afflict his heart with the sickness of hope deferred. A thousand times he resolved to set his spirit at rest by speaking to her.

A thousand times he changed his mind, saying, "No, not just yet. Wait a little longer." Again and again, of course, he had rehearsed in fancy the scene that would take place between them : what he would say, and how he would say it ; what she would say, and how she would say it ; and all the rest. But he dared not put his fortune to the touch. The chance of rejection was too appalling. "No, no ; not yet. I must give her time to become a little better acquainted with me." Besides, would it be quite the thing for him to declare his passion to her, until he had received from his mother an answer to his letter of August 12th ? Until his mother's answer should arrive, he must consider himself in a certain sense betrothed to another woman. This consideration, however, was a secondary and incidental one, and had very little real weight with him, as events presently proved.

The days and the weeks slipped away with breathtaking speed. Suddenly, lo ! it was September 24th, and to-morrow night he must leave Paris for Havre ; and still—ill omen !—the expected letter from his mother had not come ; and still he was in doubt about his fate.

"Well, I can't wait any longer," he said. "I've been a fool to wait so long. To-night I'll call

upon her, and get the doctor to leave us alone together ; and—and then—”

Ah, how his heart bounded at the prospect !

That afternoon he walked in the Luxembourg Gardens. The sunset had faded, and it had grown almost dark, before he left them. He emerged by a gate that led into Rue de Vaugirard. He had just entered that thoroughfare, and was sauntering slowly in the direction of the Boulevard St.-Michel, when, from behind, a pedestrian, whose gait was faster than his own, overtook and passed him. What was his surprise, his delight, to recognize in this personage—as he did, at once—none other than Denise ! She was hurrying along as rapidly as her tiny footsteps could bear her.

A few swift strides brought him nearly abreast of her.

“Mademoiselle—Mademoiselle Denise !” he called.

Hearing this voice, quite unexpectedly, so close to her ear, and before she had seen the speaker, frightened her thoroughly. She started, shrank away towards the curbstone, gave a little cry, and then stood motionless, as though uncertain whether to fly or stand her ground.

He understood in an instant how careless he had been. He could have flogged himself. His emo-

tions overwhelmed him, defied restraint, rushed to his lips, and were uttered before he knew it :

“ Why—Denise—don’t—don’t you know me ? Oh, did I frighten you ? Oh, forgive me—forgive me, Denise—my—my little girl.”

She looked up at him, face blanched, eyes big with fear.

“ Oh, it is you ! ” she cried, with a great sigh of relief ; and impulsively she put out her hand, and caught his arm.

He could feel her tremble.

“ Oh—you—startled me so,” she said, in a weak voice.

“ I was a brute. I ought to have thought. I might have known that coming up behind you suddenly, in that way—I might have known that it would frighten you. But I was so surprised, so glad, to see you, I never thought of anything except to overtake you. But there—there,”—soothingly,—“ don’t feel badly any more. Why, you are trembling from head to foot. Oh, and it was I—it was I who made you.”

“ I suppose I am very silly. I ought to have known your voice. But it was so sudden,” she explained ; and at the recollection a new tremor swept over her, and her grasp upon his arm was tightened.

"But you are still trembling," he protested.
"You—you are not afraid of me any more?"

She looked up at him again, with great wondering, reproachful eyes. "Afraid of *you*!" she cried. And in the intonation of those three words he read all that he longed to know. "Afraid of *you*!" Such scorn of the idea, such astonishment that he could have entertained it, such complete, unquestioning trustfulness, as the tone indicated, could have been inspired by no other sentiment than the love he wished for.

The violent beating of his heart, the whirl of his senses, made it impossible for him to speak. They were standing in the open street: it would not do for him to obey his impulse and fold her in his arms. He covered her hand with his, and pressed it, while he strove to master his agitation.

"Why," she said softly, "you—it is *you* who are trembling now."

"Yes. . . . I can't help it. . . . I love you so, Denise."

He felt her fingers close upon his arm.

"Denise—"

"Yes?"

"Do—do you—care anything—for me?"

Silence.

"Denise—won't you—tell me?"

"Oh, how—oh, why do you make me say it? You must know I do."

Presently, after some further speech between them, which, though to themselves of vital interest and importance, would most likely pall upon the reader,—so obvious, so sentimental, so tautological, it was,—presently he vouchsafed the information that he had loved her from the very beginning of their acquaintance; that he had become enamoured of her at first sight.

Why, then, she wondered, had he waited so long about telling her so?

He explained that the fear of rejection had tied his tongue.

And if—if it hadn't been for this accidental encounter in the street, he would have gone away from Paris, back to New York—he would have left her in that way, without letting her know at all? Oh!

"No, no, Denise. I was going to call upon you this evening, and ask the doctor to leave us alone together; and then—and then—!"

More sentiment; more tautology.

"Oh, but—oh, to think—to think that you have got to go—so soon—to—to-morrow night—and be—be gone all winter!" Her voice broke into a sob.

"There, there, my—" A perfect flood of sentiment and tautology.

At the door of her house they parted, he promising to return after dinner and spend the evening.

Climbing up the staircase of the Hôtel de l'Univers, toward his own room, he heard the voice of his landlady calling after him : "Monsieur ! Monsieur Ormizon !"

"Yes ?" he queried, halting.

"Des lettres—des lettres pour vous, monsieur."

The landlady ran up to meet him, and put a large batch of American letters into his hand.

One of these letters was addressed to him in the penmanship of his mother !

XI.

At sight of his mother's handwriting, all at once the great joy in Stephen Ormizon's heart went out ; expired in a sudden spasm, like a flame upon which cold water had been poured. It was supplanted by dread and foreboding. His hands became stone-cold, and gave off a scant clammy, moisture. He could feel a small spot of fire begin to burn in either cheek. He could count the pulsations of the arteries in his temples. A lump gathered in

his throat. In his breast there was a heavy, chilling weight, like a ball of ice.

He mounted with leaden footsteps the remainder of the staircase, and entered his room carrying the letter. He had to struggle hard before he could muster the courage to open it.

"What are you afraid of?" he asked himself. "Can words hurt you? Likely enough she says exactly what you want her to. And even if she doesn't? what of it? Aren't you big enough to stand a scolding? Come, come!"

That was all very well, very right and sensible. Nevertheless, it was with a quaking heart that at last he tore off the envelope, and by the flickering light of his candle proceeded to read:

"NEW YORK, September 12, 1885.

"DEAR STEPHEN,—Rather more than a fortnight ago I received a letter bearing the Paris postmark, and signed with your name, which, if it had not been written in your unmistakable hand, I could never have brought myself to believe came from a child of mine. That my son, my own flesh and blood, whom I endeavored conscientiously to train up in the way he should go, and to imbue him with the same high principles by which I have always guided my own life,—that he can be so steeped in selfishness, so utterly lost to all sense of honor and decency, so indifferent to his pledges and to his duty, so false, so callous, so unchristian, as the

writer of this letter proves himself to be, is almost incredible to me. I have always recognized with sorrow that you had many faults and weaknesses ; that you were dangerously fond of the pleasures of the world, and sadly lacking in strength and decision of character. But this I attributed to your youth. I had never suspected that you were a monster of ingratitude, a coward, a poltroon. With what a shock the revelation of your baseness comes to me, I leave you to imagine. I shudder when I think of the punishment that must some time overtake you ; for it is not within the bounds of Divine justice that such conduct should go forever unpunished. I trust and pray that you may be led to a timely repentance.

“For a while I hesitated about showing your letter to Fanny. I was ashamed to let her, or indeed any one else, see to what depths my own son could stoop ; and I hated also to destroy her illusions concerning you, and her respect and affection for you. But eventually I concluded that I really ought to do so, that she was entitled to know everything that related to her betrothed husband. So, having tried to prepare her for its contents, I gave her your letter to read. She took it and read it ; and then, much to *my* surprise, she did not manifest any surprise at all. She confessed to me than she had always been afraid you were very worldly and depraved, and capable, if not guilty, of almost any wickedness ; and that this letter simply confirmed her fears. Just think of that !

She said she had concealed her opinion from me through consideration for my feelings and reluctance to occasion me such anguish as she knew I must suffer now. Those were her exact words. Imagine my mortification at hearing my child spoken of in such terms by that angel, and being unable to defend him ! She went on to say that, so far as she personally was concerned, she freely forgave both your behavior toward her and the insulting expressions you made use of about her, but that she never would or could forgive your outrageous conduct toward your mother. It would be her earnest prayer that your proud heart might be humbled and chastened, and your eyes opened to the folly and sinfulness of your ways. She pointed out that the saddest aspect of your letter was its hypocrisy—your endeavor to disguise your selfishness and faithlessness under the cloak of virtue. You actually have the presumption to preach a sermon to your mother. All your talk about right and duty and religion would make me smile, if it were less impious and blasphemous.

“ I have waited till now to answer your letter, so that my grief and my indignation might abate sufficiently for me to write calmly and without heat. Now, after much thought, and after having taken the advice of Fanny, and of the Rev. Mr. Wilcox (who, though a young man, is as wise as he is good), our new pastor, this is what I have to say :

“ Of course, being over the age of twenty-one

years, you are a free agent, and are at liberty to do in every respect whatever pleases you, without consulting your mother. You are at liberty to commit the worst crimes, and to practice the lowest vices ; and I have no power to restrain you. So, of course, you are at liberty to break the solemn promises you made to me, and to ignore your duty toward Fanny, and to marry this Frenchwoman with whom you seem to have become so infatuated ; and I can do nothing to prevent you. But if you see fit to take this course, I may tell you frankly, once for all,—and you know that, unlike my son, I am not a person to break my word,—I may tell you once for all that so long as I live I will never consent to see you, or to speak to you, or to have anything to do with you, again. If you can stoop to such disgraceful conduct, I shall nevermore acknowledge you as a child of mine. You had better understand this clearly. To employ your own language, you would only be uselessly deceiving yourself to doubt it. Unless, immediately upon the receipt of this letter, you come home, and crave Fanny's and my forgiveness upon your bended knees, and at once make her your wife, you need never hope to be recognized as my son again. Therefore it is for you to choose between your Frenchwoman and your mother. I will not tolerate any dilly-dallying, any discussion. I have spoken my last word ; and you know me well enough to be aware that I always mean exactly what I say.

“Now, furthermore. You will remember that in his will your father left me all his property absolutely, in fee simple. Of course it was his intention, and until now it has been mine as well, that upon my death that property should pass on to you. But your father made no such condition in his will, and I am informed by my lawyer that I have full power to dispose of every penny precisely as I desire. Well, then, if you decide to marry your Frenchwoman, I will, besides immediately cutting off your allowance, cause my will to be altered in such a way that upon my death you will not receive a single dollar, but every cent will go to my beloved niece, Fanny Clark. I am sure, if your father were alive, he would approve of this course. You may calculate from this how much money you and your French wife will have to live on. Foolishly, little foreseeing the sort of treatment I was to receive at your hands, I made you a present, when you came of age, of the sum of ten thousand dollars in government bonds. My lawyer informs me that I can not compel you to return that sum. If you were a man of honor, you would return it without being compelled. But by marrying your Mademoiselle you will prove that you are in no sense a man of honor ; and so I shall not expect that restitution from you. Well, ten thousand dollars in government bonds will yield you an annual income of about four hundred dollars. I should like to know how you and your wife will manage to get along on that ; you, who are accus-

tomed to every luxury, and who for the past five years have never spent less than twenty-five hundred dollars a year. How much do you suppose you would be able to earn? Not much by your literature, I suspect. You have no profession. And with neither a profession nor a large capital, what could you do? Well, you might obtain a clerkship at ten dollars a week, or you might get a position as conductor on a horse-car, or something like that. Imagine the pride and the pleasure your mother would take in seeing her son engaged in such a dignified and distinguished occupation!

“Now, that is all I have to say. If you come home and confess your repentance, and agree to marry Fanny right away, we will forgive you everything. We will ascribe your past conduct to the fascination which that Frenchwoman exerted over you. We will forgive and forget it. But if you persist in your own vicious desires, you know from the above what to expect.

“Your mother,

“EUNICE C. ORMIZON.”

“P. S.—Oh, Stephen, Stephen, don’t break your old mother’s heart. Come home to me, my dearest son, and make me happy by marrying Fanny. Remember, you promised me you would. Don’t you consider a promise sacred? Come home; and we will never refer to this unfortunate affair again. Fanny is such a lovely angelic girl—how can you think of anybody else? She will welcome you with open arms, and give you full pardon.

Telegraph me that you will do as I wish. I am so unhappy, thinking that this one deepest wish of my heart, which I have cherished for so many years, is to be disappointed. Telegraph me, and then sail, as you intended, on the 26th. You should arrive not later than the 5th or 6th of October. Then we can have the wedding at once—say, on the 17th, which is Fanny's birthday.—Recollect, if you disobey me in this matter, I shall stick to every word that I have written above.

“E. C. O.”

Abuse, threats, entreaties!

Stephen Ormizon read this letter through, standing up. Then he allowed it to drop from his grasp and flutter to the floor. “Just what I might have expected!” he groaned, through clinched teeth, and, sinking upon a chair, covered his face with his hands, sore, angry, sick at heart. How insulting it was! How unjust, how unreasonable! How hard and—yes, and vulgar! Just what he might have expected, he had said; and yet he had not expected anything of the kind. The coarse vituperation of it surprised him as much as it hurt him. He was a coward, a poltroon, a monster of ingratitude, etc., etc. True, it had always been this way. In every difference that he had ever had with his mother, she had exhibited a masterly aptitude for calling names; and he had heard a

good many times before that he was this, that, and the other dreadful thing. Yet now, notwithstanding, he was completely staggered and taken aback, as by a blow in the face. If he had been lashed with a whip, he could not have suffered a keener or more furious sense of outrage. His set jaws, his scowling brows, his rigid limbs, his quivering nostrils, his swift breathing, told more plainly than his tongue could have done, of how that letter had made him smart.

He sat still for a while, grinding his teeth together with such force it was a wonder he did not break them; drumming with the sole of his boot upon the floor; overwhelmed by his pain and his indignation. Now and then his feelings would seek to vent themselves, and find relief, in a good strong Saxon oath, muttered half aloud. At length he jumped up and began pacing back and forth through his room.

What should he do about it? What action had he best take?

His first thought was the simplest, the most obvious one. Do about it? Why, marry Denise. Marry her just as soon as circumstances would allow—immediately—to-morrow, if that were possible. Marry her; and then let his mother do her worst. Let her disown him, cut off his allowance,

bequeath every shilling of his property to Fanny—what she would. He could stand it, if she could, he guessed. He would have Denise! And so long as he had her, he could snap his fingers at the universe. About the wherewithal, he need not be disturbed. He had enough. Ten thousand dollars in government bonds—that certainly would keep him until he had established himself as an author and was earning a regular and ample income with his pen,—which he did not doubt his ultimate ability to do. Return the money? Return the ten thousand dollars in government bonds? Faugh! Wasn't his mother virtually robbing him of his own already, by taking advantage of an oversight in the wording of his father's will, a mere lawyer's quibble, and giving the fortune which his father had earned, and which had been intended for his enjoyment, to her niece Fanny—whom, by the by, his father had always cordially disliked? Why, it—it was enough to make his father turn in his grave. In the white heat of his anger, he even looked so far ahead as his mother's demise, and determined to contest her will, and to defeat the sanctimonious young legatee, in spite of all. Such injustice! Such downright thievery! It wasn't the money that he cared about. It was the principle of the

thing. How he would enjoy seeing Fanny baffled and defeated ! Ha ! ha ! ha ! He laughed wildly at the idea. Yes, he would throw up the passage he had engaged aboard *La Touraine*, stay where he was, and marry Denise at the earliest feasible date. He would go and see the United States Consul to-morrow morning, to arrange about it.

That there remained, in spite of all, a question of respect and duty toward his mother, did not once enter his head. He had no doubt that his mother would keep her word and make good every threat that she had uttered. But, in his great passion and exasperation, this seemed a very trifling and unimportant matter.

By and by, however, one aspect of the problem occurred to him, which he had not thought of before, and which, he could not deny, certainly did merit some consideration. Denise—what would Denise say, what would she do, if she were aware of his mother's opposition ? Would she be willing to become his wife, in the face of it ?

This query struck terror to his soul ; for, in spite of his desire to the contrary, he could not but feel confident that the right answer was No. Denise would never consent wittingly to step between a mother and her son. She would say, "I

love you, yes. But we must not marry. We have no right to purchase our happiness at the price of your mother's sorrow. There is nothing for us to do but to wait until she will give us her permission." Such an attitude, in his opinion, would be entirely unreasonable and indefensible; a quixotism of the worst kind. But he could not override the conviction that it was exactly the attitude which Denise—which, for that matter, almost any fine-grained, sensitive woman—would, under the circumstances, assume. Women, in affairs of this nature, are so unthinking, so hopelessly the creatures of their impulses and sentiments.

"Yes! If I let her know, it will be all up with me. She'll send me about my business."

Out of the slough of despond into which this conclusion cast him, he could discern but one means of egress: to keep the fact of his mother's opposition a secret from his sweetheart until after their wedding ceremony had been performed.

But instantly, of course, against the practice of any such deceit his manlier instincts rose in revolt.

To induce Denise to become his wife, without first apprising her of a state of things which, if she suspected it, would determine her to give him up, would be to obtain her under false pretenses,

by the employment of trick and device. It would be unfair and dishonorable in the extremest sense. Besides, inevitably, a day of reckoning would come. He could not expect to conceal it from her forever. After they were married, she would be sure, by its very nature, to find it out. And then—would she not hold him guilty of irreparable and unpardonable wrong toward her, and visit him with her scorn and her displeasure? Anyhow, it was her right to know it. It was her right to possess full knowledge of every circumstance that bore in any degree upon this question of their marriage. He must not let the woman he loved undertake blindfold so grave an obligation. No ; there was but a single line of conduct open to him. He must lay a complete statement of the case before her ; and then he must bow to her decision.

“ And that means that my doom is as good as sealed. Of course her decision will be against me.”

And now—“ Heaven help me ! How shall I break it to her ! How shall I let her know ? She—she’ll be expecting me before a great while now. And have I—have I got to go around there and tell her this ? It will break her heart. She loves me. She said she loved me. And she is so happy. And now—oh, God, no, no ! Go around

there, and turn all her happiness into pain? No, I can't do it. I can't do it. Why, it would be the same as if I were to go around there, and—and knock her down. You can't expect me to do that. If this letter had only come a few hours earlier—before I spoke to her! Then I should not have spoken. But now—after I have told her how I love her—after I have wrung from her a confession of her love for me, and asked her to be my wife, and made her say yes—now—to have to go and tell her this—! Oh, it's too much! Oh, Denise, my little girl! How can I do it? How—”

He was interrupted by a loud rapping at his door.

For an instant—to such a pitch of nervous excitement had he wrought himself—this commonplace and not unusual noise startled and almost terrified him. He came to an abrupt standstill, and caught his breath. Then, recovering his presence of mind, “Entrez,” he called out.

The door opened.

“Hello, Ormizon. It's me—Palmer. Thought I'd come around to bid you good-by. You leave to-morrow, don't you?”

“Oh, how do you do? I'm glad to see you. Come in. Sit down.”

“Why—why, what's the matter with you? You

look sort of flustered. Anything gone askew? Maybe my visit is ill-timed. If I'm *de trop*, speak right up, and I'll take myself off."

"Oh, no, not at all; on the contrary. You're very welcome. It was very kind of you to come. I should have been sorry to go away without shaking hands with you. Here; take this chair; do."

"Thanks. Since you urge me, I will. But I say, old boy, you can't fool me. Something's up. That's as clear as daylight. You look—you look as though you'd got a challenge to fight a duel. If you need a second, I'm your man. Come; unburden your sorrowing soul. Tell me the story of your woes. Perhaps I can be of assistance to you. Pour thy griefs into my sympathetic ear." Palmer put his hand up to his ear, after the manner of deaf people.

Ormizon laughed. Then, gravely, "By Jove, Palmer, I don't know but I will," he said. "You're a man of good common sense. You may be able to advise me. I'm in the very devil of a fix. I—I'm the most miserable fellow on the surface of the earth."

"Advise you? Why, you've hit upon my very forte. In point of worldly wealth I'm as poor as Job's turkey; but in point of good advice I'm as rich as Cræsus and as generous as Peter Cooper. Come; out with it. What's the row?"

"Well, Palmer, it's this. You know Mademoiselle Denise—Mademoiselle Personette?"

"I am honored with her acquaintance—yes. Well?"

"Well, I—I'm—as you'd say, I suppose—I'm head over ears in love with her."

"Ah? So? The frank confession does you proud. But is that all? For, to tell you the truth, that's no news to me."

"It isn't? You guessed it? Well, I suppose it was pretty evident. But—no, that isn't all. This afternoon I—I proposed to her—asked her to be my wife."

"Ah, I see. Popped the question, and got the mitten. Oh, well, you mustn't let that discourage you. If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."

"No. She accepted me."

"What! She did! You lucky dog! Well, I swan! Well, really, I don't see why *that* should make you feel so bad."

"No; but just hold on. After I left her, and came home, I found here, waiting for me, a letter from my mother, which said—which said that in case I married Mademoiselle Personette she—she'd stop my allowance, cut me out of her will, and—and never recognize me or have anything to do with me again."

"Oh ! So that's the racket. . . . Still—well—but—but if you're really very much in love with her, I shouldn't think you'd let that stop you."

"I should say not. I'm not such a—such a sneak as that. No, indeed. So far as I'm concerned, that would have no more influence over me than the blowing of the breeze. But the point is—the question is—what will she—what will Denise say, when she finds it out ? When she finds out that my mother is opposed to our marrying, she—she won't look at me—she'll give me the right-about-face in no time. Don't you see ?"

"Whew ! By George ! there's something in that. I guess you're right. Yes, I guess you are. She—she's got such a—such a fine sense of what's proper and correct. Yes, sir, I guess you're about right. But—but you speak about her finding it out. How is she going to find it out ? I don't see."

"Why, from me, of course. Of course I shall tell her."

"You will ? You'll tell her ? Why, what in thunder—what under the sun—do you want to tell her for ?"

"Why, how can I help it ? It wouldn't be honest or honorable for me to keep it from her. For me to go and get her to marry me, without telling her,—why, it would be the same as deceiv-

ing her and cheating her—the same as lying to her.”

“ Ah, yes. I see. I see your point. Hum ; you *have* got yourself in a box, and no mistake. It’s too bad ; it really is. But look here, Ormizon ; do you want to know my candid opinion ? ”

“ Yes, what is it ? ”

“ Well, it’s this. If she cares about you enough to agree to be your wife—if she’s as much in love with you as that—by George, you might as well take her and kill her outright, as to go round there and tell her things that will make her have to give you up. It will break the little thing’s heart. It will, as sure as my name’s Hiram.”

“ Good Lord, Palmer, don’t sit there and tell me that ! Don’t you suppose I know that well enough ? That—that’s just the—the horrible part of it. I’m between two fires.”

“ Exactly. So you are—between the devil and the deep sea. You’ve got to make a choice of evils. You’ve got to choose between deceiving her and breaking her heart. And if you want my advice, as you said you did, I tell you what. If I were in your place, I wouldn’t hesitate. I’d deceive her. It would be what you call a pious fraud. The end would justify the means.”

“ No, I can’t—I can’t agree with you about that,

Palmer. I couldn't—I actually couldn't—lie to her."

"Who said anything about lying to her? There's no need that you should lie to her. I'm the last man in the world to advise anybody to lie."

"Well, but I don't see the difference. You said, deceive her. Well, that's as bad as lying. That's only another name for the same thing."

"Well, I don't know that I should even deceive her—exactly. This is what I'd do. I'd tell her frankly that I was on bad terms with my mother—that my mother and I had had a row—but I'd be blamed before I'd tell her *why*—before I'd let her know that she was the cause of it. Then I'd marry her—just as soon as I could scare up a parson."

"Yes; and then, after you were married, she'd find it out—she'd discover the trick you'd played her—and she'd—she'd despise you for it."

"She'd be a little angry at first, I dare say. But she'd come round. You see, she's a woman, and she loves you. Well, grant, then, that when she first found it out she'd be a little worked up: she'd recognize that you'd done it because you wanted to spare her unhappiness, and because you loved her so; and, though she'd pout and scold for a while, in her heart she'd be glad all the time,

and she'd forgive you. Whereas if you go around there and tell her,—good-by, Mrs. Ormizon. It'll be all up with you ; and she'll swim down to her grave in a flood of tears. Come, my young friend; brace up. Take my advice, and keep your own counsel."

"By Jove, Palmer, I don't know but you're right. You—you really think she'd forgive me?"

"I don't think it. I know it. Forgive you? Why, in the long run she'd love you all the better for it."

"By—by the Lord, Palmer, you—you're a—By Jove, old boy, give me your hand. By—my—well, there, I can't—I can't express it—but—*oh!* you've lifted such a weight off my mind."

"Ouch ! Look out !" cried Palmer. "You'll break my wrist, if you keep on wagging my flipper that way. There, there. Calmez-vous. And—Hello ; there's some one knocking on your door."

"Come in ! Entrez !" called Ormizon.

"Ah, bonsoir, monsieur. Here is a letter for you from Mademoiselle Gluck."

The new-comer was Zélie, the servant of the ladies of the Rue Soufflot.

Ormizon took the letter which she held out to him, broke the seal, and read :

“DEAR MR. ORMIZON:—Come over here the instant you receive this—without a second’s delay.

“Yours, I. B. G.”

“What—what’s the matter? Is there anything the matter?” he demanded of Zélie, in a scared, anxious voice.

“Je n’en sais rien, monsieur ; mais je crois que Mademoiselle Personette est malade.”

That was all the satisfaction he could get from Zélie. She knew nothing, but she believed that Mademoiselle Personette was ill. Particulars of any kind, though he plied her with questions, she protested her inability to give. Dr. Gluck had called her from the kitchen, where she was busy preparing dinner, and had despatched her with this note, bidding her make haste. “Voilà tout ce que je peux vous dire, monsieur.”

Panic-stricken, leaving Lancelot in possession of his quarters, and without a word to him, he hurried to respond to the doctor’s summons.

XII.

He gave the bell-cord a tremendous tug. The bell clanged violently within.

After what seemed to him an eon, though, in point of fact, it was not half a minute, Dr. Gluck opened the door.

"For God's sake, what has happened?" he cried. "Has—is—is Denise—"

"Hush. Come in," interrupted the doctor. "Come with me."

She led the way to the salon.

"Sit down, now, and be calm," she said. "You needn't alarm yourself. But I thought I had better send for you. I thought I had better tell you all about it, and learn from you the exact state of the case."

"Yes, yes, of course. I'm very glad you did. But—but go on. What is it? Tell me, quick. Don't keep me in suspense."

"Sh-sh! Now, you mustn't get excited. She's in her room now, lying on the sofa, very weak and exhausted, but not seriously ill. You see, she fainted. And I got terribly frightened, she took so long about coming to. But she's perfectly herself again now; only, as I say, weak and undone. She's wild to—well, never mind about that till I've told you the rest."

"But how—what—what made her faint? She—"

"Yes, I'm going to tell you the whole story, if you'll give me time, and control yourself, and not go off in a passion. . . . Well, to begin at the beginning, you see, when Denise came home this evening I saw right away that something had

happened,—from her excitement and nervousness and the way she acted, you know, and everything. And of course I was as curious as could be to find out what it was. And I asked her lots of questions ; and at last—well, at last she told me all about it—how you had met her in the Rue de Vaugirard, and how you had frightened her, and then declared yourself to her—and all the rest. Really, I don't think I ever saw anybody so happy and elated as she was. She was just in a perfect tremor of delight. Well—well, of course, then we talked and talked about it for ever so long ; and it was so interesting and so exciting, you understand, that I—I totally forgot to give her the letter. . . . There ! I guess I haven't told you, have I ? But while she was out, a letter had been delivered for her—a letter from America—which was quite strange, for I didn't know that she had any correspondents over there. . . . Well, as I say, in the excitement of our talk, I entirely forgot it ; but all of a sudden I remembered it, and went and got it, and gave it to her. We were standing right here in the parlor, just about where you and I are now. Well, she took it ; and she wondered whom in the world it could be from, and she couldn't possibly imagine, because, she said, she didn't know a single soul in America who would

be likely to write to her ; and at last she opened it, and began to read it. Well, she couldn't have read more than two or three lines at the utmost, when, the first thing I knew, she gave a scream, and she turned as white as a sheet, and fell—and fell right down in a dead faint on the floor. And then—”

“ Good Lord ! I—I'm sure *I* know whom the letter was from,” he gasped.

“ Yes, I dare say you do. I dare say you can guess. Well, of course, when she fainted, she let it drop from her hand. And after I had attended to her, and done everything I could, I picked it up, and read it—which I felt at liberty to do. Well, it was *enough* to make her faint. It was indeed. And if it's true—But I can't believe it is. I can't believe that you are such a villain. Here ; read it ; here it is.”

In his mother's handwriting, the envelope bore this superscription : “ M'lle Personette, care of Miss Isabel B. Gluck, Rue Soufflot, Paris, France.”

“ Oh, what a fool I was ! ” he groaned. “ I suppose I must have mentioned your address when I wrote to her. My God ! I never thought she'd—I never dreamed she'd— Oh, this—this is awful ! ”

“ I was wondering how she found it out,” said the doctor. “ I thought maybe she got it from the

Merriwethers. . . . But you'd better go on now and read it, don't you think?"

"Yes, I suppose I had."

The letter ran as follows:

"NEW YORK, September 12, 1885.

"*MADemoiselle PERSONETTE*,—I beg leave to inform you by this that my son, Stephen Ormizon, whom, I have reason to believe, you have endeavored to infatuate, is already engaged to be married to his cousin, my niece, Miss Fanny Clark. Now, as I have no doubt that the chief attractions which you find in my son are his wealth and his social position, I shall be doing you a kindness when I take this opportunity to warn you that if he should see fit to break his engagement with Miss Clark, and to contract a marriage with you, I shall at once disown and disinherit him, which will deprive him immediately both of his social standing and of all means of support, present and future; also, that I shall never recognize or acknowledge you as his wife, nor him as my son, but shall regard you both as entire strangers to me, to the day of my death. By the same mail I post a letter to my son, forbidding him to marry you, and commanding him to come home instantly and fulfill his obligations to Miss Clark. I write you this as a favor to you, in order that you may understand exactly what to expect in case you persist in your attempts to lead my son into a *mésalliance*.

"Respectfully,

"EUNICE C. ORMIZON."

With a cry of rage, Ormizon sprang to his feet, and began storming about the room.

"By God!—I'll never forgive my mother this. How brutal! How outrageous! As long as I live I'll never forgive her for writing to Denise like this. No—not if she got down on her knees to her, and begged her pardon, I'd never forgive her for having insulted and outraged her like this. Oh, it—it's incredible. I can't believe it. I never would have believed her capable of anything as bad as this. It's—oh—I— What—what did Denise say? What—oh, Lord! I—I could kill my mother for writing this. Oh, I suppose Denise—I suppose she'll never look at me again, after this. Oh, what a—what a fool, what a wretch, what a miserable, miserable dog I am!"

"Hush—hush—hush," the doctor had been imploring him, following him around the room, and waving her hands deprecatingly. "You'll disturb her. She'll hear you, and be frightened. Do calm yourself. Sit down. Be still. I want to talk to you."

But to no purpose. He had not heeded her. Now, however, of his own accord, he came to a stand-still, and was silent.

"There! Do sit down," she pleaded. "Now, don't fly off; but sit down, and be quiet, and tell

me now,—you may as well tell me honestly,—is it true?”

He dropped upon a chair.

“True?” he repeated, with a dazed look.
“True? What? Is what true?”

“Why, what your mother says. Is it true that you are engaged to be married to your cousin—to Fanny Clark?”

“Oh! That! No; it’s a lie—it’s a damn—I beg your pardon, doctor. It’s a—well, that is, at least, it’s this way. You see, I was—yes, I suppose I was—engaged to her—after a fashion. That is, before I left New York, my mother, she—she made me promise—she extorted a promise from me—that I—that I would marry Fanny. And I promised—like a—like the—like the miserable fool I was. But the very instant I first saw Denise—as soon as I realized how I loved her—two or three days after I first met her, by Jove!—why, it was on the morning after we had been to hear *Monsieur Perrichon*—I—I wrote a letter to my mother, and confessed that I was in love with Denise, and told her that I couldn’t and wouldn’t marry Fanny. I thought that—you see—I thought that was the fair and square thing to do. Well, that was as good as breaking whatever engagement there was—wasn’t it? That was the beginning of all this

trouble. If I'd kept my mouth shut—if I'd kept my own counsel— Oh, well, it's too late now. The mischief is done. . . . Oh, God, I never expected this—such treachery as this—from—from my own mother !”

“ And you really *are* in love with Denise? You don't—you never cared anything for your cousin?”

“ Care for her? Care for Fanny? Care for that— Oh, you make me laugh. Why, I tell you, I—I hate her. I've always hated her—ever since I was a child—ever since she came to live with us. Hasn't she always been— Oh, I despise her. I'd like—I'd be glad—to see her—”

“ There, there; never mind about that. And Fanny—your cousin—does she care for you?”

“ Does Fanny care for me! That's good! That's capital, doctor! The idea of Fanny caring for me! The sanctimonious hypocrite! The—the— Why, she thinks I'm the worst reprobate unhung. She thinks I'm not good enough to tie her shoe-strings. All she's after is my mother's money. She'll get it now. I wish her joy of it.”

“ Then, as a matter of fact, you are free? You have broken the engagement you had with your cousin, and are at liberty to marry anybody you choose?”

“ What's the use of your asking me that? Any-

body I choose ! Do you imagine Denise would have me, after that letter ? You don't suppose she'd marry the son of the woman who wrote that letter ? Oh, how she must despise me ! She'll never look at me again—after that letter from—from my own mother ! Oh, it's too hard ! I could—I could—" He shook his fist at the empty air, and sprang to his feet again.

"Hush ! She'll hear you. Sit down. Come, sit down here beside me, where you were before. There ; now you must be quiet and rational. I'm going to tell you something now that will—that will surprise you, and—and make you very happy."

"Well, go on. Tell it to me. Tell me anything you want to. But there's nothing that can surprise me, nothing that can make me very happy, after this—after I've lost the only thing I care for in the world. Well, go on."

"Well, if it doesn't make you happy, it will be a wonder, and you'll be an ungrateful thing. It seems like a special providence ; it does indeed. Well, it's this : Denise—Denise doesn't know a thing about it."

"Doesn't know a—doesn't know a thing about what ? What are you driving at ? I don't understand."

"Doesn't know a thing about your engagement

to Miss Clark—about what your mother wrote in this letter.”

“*What!* . . . Why—you—you said—didn’t you say—she read it—and that—and that was what—made her faint away? I—I give it up. I don’t see your point. What—what in . . .”

“Sh—sh! Now, behave yourself. Now, I’m going to explain. Now, sit right there, and don’t you move or interrupt, or I shan’t say a word. Now, listen. . . . Well, this is all there is to it. When Denise came to—when she finally opened her eyes, and recovered her senses—she was all dazed and bewildered, and she didn’t remember a single thing of what had happened—not a thing about the letter. You see, she couldn’t remember, because it had all been so quick and sudden. As I should say, speaking technically, the last impressions received by her brain before she fainted had simply been obliterated, wiped out, by the shock. Do you understand? . . . Well, of course, when she came to, she was awfully curious to know what had happened to make her faint, and she must have asked a hundred questions. But I wasn’t going to tell her the real truth, until I had seen you, and spoken to you, and found out whether it was so—what your mother wrote. So I just said that she had been very tired and weak, and, then, the ex-

citement and the happiness and everything had been too much for her, and the strain had caused a fainting-fit. Well, of course that was a fib. But I thought, under the circumstances, that it was all right. And she—she believed it, and was perfectly satisfied. There !”

“Oh, doctor, you—you’re— Oh, what can I say to tell you how good you are, how grateful you have made me ? Oh, this—this—it’s—it’s too good to be true ! Oh, my God !” he cried ; and in a twinkling he had torn his mother’s letter into a hundred pieces.

“Well, now,” went on the doctor, “as I was going to tell you, she’s wild, perfectly wild, to see you ; and now I’ll go and tell her that you are here. But first I want to warn you. You must be guarded. You must look out for your tongue, and not let her suspect a thing about all this. Otherwise—”

“You needn’t be afraid, doctor. I guess you may trust me for that.”

The doctor left the room.

Oh, with what a trembling, throbbing, thrilling heart, a minute later, he beheld Denise crossing the threshold, coming toward him, nearer, nearer . . . !

There ! She was in his arms, her head nestling upon his breast.

"I am so glad you have come," she said, in a weak, fluttering voice.

"Yes, I have come, Denise, to tell you—to tell you that I am not going away, as I expected. I am not going to sail on Saturday. I have decided to postpone it. But when I do sail, you—you will come with me—will you, Denise?"

She made no answer.

"Why—why, Denise—my love! You—why, you are crying. What is it, Denise?"

"Oh, I—I am—crying—for—for happiness," she sobbed.

Knock—knock—knock—upon the door.

"Entrez!" called Denise.

Zélie entered, bearing a large pasteboard box.

"Quelque chose pour vous, mademoiselle," she said.

The box was full of great, beautiful red roses; and on top of them lay a card; and on the card was written, "May our dear Mamselle be as happy as she is good and beautiful!—LANCELOT."

Ormizon's novel, *A Voice from the Wilderness*,—but for which, as he often thinks with something like terror, he and Denise might never have found each other out,—was published in February, 1886.

The critics treated it very kindly, remarking in

it the crudity and the extravagance of youth, to be sure, but commending its freshness, its interest, and its simplicity. So the book had quite a run—was read and talked about; and though it did not “place its author at a bound in the front rank of living American writers of fiction,” as we hear of so many first books doing nowadays, it did raise him from the position of a nobody to that of a small somebody,—a somebody of the ninth or tenth magnitude, but still a somebody.

And then, one fine morning, he received a letter—a letter from his mother—seeking a reconciliation!

Well, his mother and Fanny very magnanimously forgave him, and invited him and Denise to dinner, where they served up the fatted calf, and condescended to patronize his wife, and to make her feel exceedingly self-conscious and ill at ease. After the coffee, while he was smoking his cigarette, his mother took him aside and offered to renew his allowance. I am sorry to say it was not without a certain wicked sense of triumph that he thanked her, and assured her that he stood in need of no such kindness, his actual income being amply sufficient to his wants. Happily, this was true. He and Denise were living very modestly in a small apartment up in Harlem, the rent of which did not quite consume the interest on his govern-

ment bonds. For the rest, the little reputation that his book had brought him made an opening for him in the literary market, where he was generally able to sell his wares at remunerative prices, always provided that they were up to the required standard of excellence. . . . Oh, I had nearly forgotten. In addition to their other sources of revenue, they took a boarder. The boarder was a very pretty, plump little lady, not much older than thirty years. And though Ormizon was extremely attentive to her, and apparently very fond of her, Denise never manifested the least symptom of jealousy. The boarder's name was Gluck—Isabel B. Gluck, M.D.

MR. SONNENSCHN'S INHERITANCE.

I.

SCHLEMIEL.

THE English language very likely possesses an equivalent for the Jüdisch word Schlemiel; but I have tried in vain to find it. Briefly, a Schlemiel is a person who never prospers, with whom everything goes wrong. Born under an evil star, or with a leaden spoon in his mouth, he is constitutionally unsuccessful. Misfortune has marked him for her own; ill luck accompanies him through life. The witty Jewish author Leopold Kompert says that while other people seize opportunities by the head, the Schlemiel lays hold of them by the foot, and allows them to wriggle and kick themselves loose. Put gold into the hands of your Schlemiel, adds Kompert, it turns to copper. Let him purchase a cask of wine; when he opens the spigot, vinegar gushes forth. Yet, of all mortal men, the Schlemiel is usually the best-natured, the lightest-hearted. A perpetual

sunny smile illuminates his face. He seems to regard his sorry destiny as an excellent practical joke, at which, though it be at his own expense, he can laugh as well as another. Calamity is his native element. He is impervious to it. He minds it no more than a salamander minds fire, or a duck water. The Lord shapes the back to the burden. That same careless and irresponsible temperament which is constantly bringing the Schlemiel to grief enables him to accept it with a shrug. Not but that, once in a while, you may meet a melancholy, even a crabbed and misanthropic, Schlemiel; but he will also be a highly exceptional Schlemiel.

By his own admission, as well as by the judgment of his friends, Emmanuel Sonnenschein was a Schlemiel. "I ain't no goot," he used to say, with an hilarious twinkle in his eye. "I ain't got no sense. I'm a raikular Schlemiel." He was a very old man, white, and bent, and wrinkled; but, though he rather prided himself upon his age, and loved to prate about it, the exact figure of it he would never tell. He had been in this country a great many years; and that again was a subject of pride with him; but again, for some unimaginable reason, he chose to make a secret of the date of his immigration.

“Old !” he would exclaim, lifting his hands toward the ceiling, and swinging his head from side to side in that peculiarly Jewish manner ; “ Old ! Gott in Himmel ! . . . Vail, Saimmy,”—he always called me Saimmy, never would Mister me, having made my acquaintance when I was in swaddling-clothes,—“vail, Saimmy, I don’t suppose you aifer knew nobody so old as me. Vail, if I told you my aich, you’d be aistonished ; you vould, honor bright. You’d be frightened, Saimmy ; it’s fearful, it simply is. Or else, I guess maybe you vouldn’t belief me ; you’d tink I vas trying to fool you. Vail, ainyhow, I von’t say anudder vord about it ; but I tell you fat you do. You can bet a hat dot I’m vun of de very oldest shentlemen de Lord aifer mait ; you can bet a hat on dot. . . . Oh, yais, I been in dis country an awful long time already,—longer as you yourself, dough you vas born here. I come ofer when I vas kervite a young feller, not more as terventy-fife or tirty ; and I’ve krown oop mit de country. Yais, I vent into de paittling business right away aifter I lainded, and I’ve paittled on and oaff aifer since. My kracious, I’ve paittled pretty much aiferydings a party could ; hair-oil, and coattoñ lace, and maitches, and insect-powter, and letter-paper, and pins and neetles,

and chewelry, and toilet-soap, and suspainters, and toot-ache droaps, and marking-ink, and ague cure, and Yainkee notions ; but I ain't naifer mait no money ; I ain't naifer haid no luck ; I vas a raikular Schlemiel. . . . Vail, I vas a pretty old shentleman already fen I got mairried ; dot was in eighteen-hoonert-sixty. Den in sixty-vun my dowter Nettie vas born, and my vife she died. Vail, I guess maybe if my vife haid lived, I guess maybe I got rich. She vas vun of de very smartest ladies in the United States. She haid sense enough for a whole faimily. But I didn't naifer haif no kind of luck ; and fen Nettie was born, my vife she died. I vas a raikular Schlemiel, dere's no two vays about it. Vail, it vas shust exaictly tree weeks aiftervards, fen Nettie vas shust exaictly tree weeks old, vun day I vas cairrying her oop and down de room, to stoap her crying,—fen I let her droap-on de floor, and her spine got inchured, and she's been a cripple aifer since. I couldn't help it, Saimmy ; I couldn't, honor bright. I felt awful about it. *Mein Gott*, I cut my troat sooner as done it ! But I couldn't help it, no more as I could help de color of my hair. I vas a Schlemiel. . . . Vail, Saimmy, you vas born in dot same year,—eighteen-sixty-vun,—vasn't you ? Yais, you and Nettie vas shust about de same

aich. But, *lieber Herr*, fat a difference ! You—rich, hainsome, healty ! Nettie—poor, crippled, bait-ritten all her life ! And it vasn't your fault dot you got dem advaintaches, no more as it vas her fault dot she ain't got 'em. Vail, dis is a funny vorld ; but the Lord is goot ; and I suppose he's got some reason for it. . . . My kra-cious, Saimmy, don't I remaimber de day you vas born, and how glaid your popper feel dot you vasn't a girl ! He vas simply delighted, Saimmy, he simply vas. Fen I look at you now, so tall and hainsome, and mit dot graind mustache and aiferydings,—vail, honor bright, I couldn't hartly belief it. Vail, dis is a vonderful vorld ; it is, and no mistake. Vail, Saimmy, how's your mommer ?”

II.

SCHLEMIEL'S EXPECTATIONS.

He lived with his crippled daughter Nettie up several flights of dark and rickety stairs, in a tenement-house overlooking Tompkins Square. Nettie passed her life between her bed and her easy-chair. Mr. Sonnenschein did the house-work,—cooked the meals and washed the dishes, made the beds and kept the quarters clean. Net-

tie's fingers were the only members of her disabled body that remained fit for service. These she busied from morning till night each day, crocheting tidies and pillow-shams and such like articles,—marvelous in their expert workmanship and in their unexampled ugliness,—which her father would “paittle” from door to door through the town, thus eking out a meagre livelihood. At our house he turned up as often as three or four times a year, bringing specimens of Nettie's handicraft in abundance sufficient to last a generation. We always bought them at his own appraisement ; but what my mother did with them I cannot say. This much is certain, she never allowed them to appear about the house. Perhaps she presented them *en bloc* to the next peddler who came along ; perhaps she had them used as kindlings for the fires. Poor Nettie ! that she should have wasted so much skill and so much labor upon such useless and unbeautiful creations !

Mr. Sonnenschein commonly arrived just as we had finished dinner, while we were getting into sympathy with our newly lighted cigars. We would install him at the table,—for in respect of that virtue which ranks second only to godliness he was unimpeachable,—fill his plate and his wineglass, and wait expectantly for the good cheer to loosen

his tongue. By and by, face fairly radiant of benevolence, he would lean back in his chair, heave a mighty sigh of satisfaction, wipe the tears of enjoyment from his eyes (with his napkin), and the unruly member would begin to wag. I always enjoyed listening to him, he was so simple-minded and so optimistic.

“Vail, now, dis is a funny vorld, Saimmy ; it is, and no mistake. Yais, it’s an awful funny vorld, dere ain’t no use in talking. Vail, now look at here. I vas a Schlemiel,—hey? Dere ain’t no kervation about dot,—I vas a Schlemiel. Vail, now look at here. Maybe you vouldn’t belief me,—you might tink I vas trying to fool you,—but, honor bright, I got a brudder ofer in Chairmany who’s vun of de very luckiest shentlemen dot vas aifer born. Now, ain’t dot funny? His name is Shakie, and me and him vas tervins. Vail, I suppose dere vasn’t goot luck enough to go around beterveen us ; so Shakie he got it all, and I didn’t get ainy. All de same, I leaf it to you if it ain’t awful funny Vail, Shakie, he vas so fearful lucky, he vent into de chewelry business, and he got rich. Vail, I don’t know shust exaictly how rich he vas ; I ain’t naifer aisked him. But I don’t belief he’s vort less as fifty or a hoonert tousand tollars. Vail, of course,

he might not be vort more as terventy-five or tirty tousand. But he's an awful rich shentleman ainyhow ; you can bet a hat on dot. Vail, Shakie he ain't naifer got mairried, nor haid no children ; so fen he dies I get his money. Vail, he cain't expect to live much longer, for he's a fearful old man by dis time already, and it ain't necheral dot he should live to get much older. Him and me vas tervins ; so he's shust exactly as old as me ; and you ain't got no idea how old dot is. Vail, I'll feel awful sorry fen Shakie dies ; yais, I'll feel simply terrible ; but he cain't expect to live much longer,—he's so fearful old,—and I'll be glaid to get dot money on account of Nettie. I don't care two cents about money on my own account ; I don't, honor bright. But poor little Nettie, she's haid such a hart time of it all her life, I'll be glaid fen I get money enough to let her live in comfort.

. . . . Vail, Saimmy, my brudder Shakie he's an awful *goot*-hearted shentleman, and he's got a lot of faimily feeling about him ; and I suppose if I wrote him a letter to-morrer, and aisked him to make me a present of a tousand tollars,—vail, I suppose Shakie he'd saind it to me by returner-mail ; he's an old beachelor, you know, and he's got so much faimily feeling. But I ain't naifer aisked him for vun single cent. No, sir ; I go to de

poor-house sooner as ask my brudder Shakie for a haif a tollar. Dot's becoase I'm so prout. You ain't got no idea how prout I am. Dere ain't no use in talking, I shouldn't vunder if I vas about de proutest shentleman de Lord aifer mait. And dot's the reason I wouldn't ask no favors of my brudder Shakie. I wouldn't let him know dot I ain't so rich as himself, not for ten hoonert thousand tollars. I'm so fearful prout. Fy, Saimmy, my brudder Shakie he don't dream dot I vas a Schlemiel. Vail, I guess maybe if he knew dot,—he's got so much faimily feeling about him,—I guess maybe if Shakie knew dot, it would break his heart."

"Well, Mr. Sonnenschein," my mother would presently inquire, "What has Nettie been doing lately? I hope you have brought some of her things with you to show us,"—thus proving herself to be a consummate hypocrite, though from the kindest motives.

His hands would fly up toward the ceiling; his head would begin to sway from side to side; and, "Ach, Nettie!" he would cry in response. "Nettie! She's a born vunder! Industrious ain't no vord for it. She's de graindest vorker in de United States, she simply is. Vork, vork, vork, from de time she vakes oop in de morning

till she goes to sleep again at night ! I naifer seen nodings like it in all my life before. It's fearful. And such a tailent ! I don't know fere she gets it. Vail, I guess maybe she gets it from her mommer. Yais, my vife vas vun of de very smartest ladies de Lord aifer mait ; and I guess maybe dot's how my dowter Nettie gets her tailent. Vail, she's been vorking a new paittern lately, fich she mait oop out of her own hait. It's de most maiknificent ting she aifer done ; it's elegant ; it's immense. I got it in tidies and piller-shaims and table-maits and bait-kervilts. You'll fall daid in loaf mit it ; I bet a hat on dot. Hold on."

Therewith he would open his pack, and display treasures, going into raptures of enthusiasm over them. "Ain't dey splendid ? Ain't dey serveet ? Ain't my dowter got a chenu-wine tailent ?" etc., etc. He was generosity incarnate, was Mr. Sonnenschein ; and after we had satisfied our consciences by the purchase of tidies enough to fit out a colony, he would throw in two or three extra ones, as he explained, "for loaf." Our protestations to the effect that he musn't rob himself he would quickly silence, crying, "Don't mention it. Don't say anudder vord about it. Dere ain't nodings stinchy about me. Good maisure, small

proafits, kervick sales,—dot's my motter. Take 'em and vailcome. You say annudder vord about it, I trow in some more." That threat was effectual. We took them.

III.

SCHLEMIEL'S PRUDENCE.

Yes, his habit was to drop in upon us not seldomer than three or four times a year; but a period of quite six months had elapsed, and he had given us no sign of life, and we were beginning to wonder what had become of him,—when, one blustering evening in November, at his usual hour, he entered our dining-room.

From the instant we laid eyes upon him we knew that something extraordinary was in the wind. His accoutrement proclaimed as much, and so did the profound dejection that was painted upon his face. Instead of the motley assortment of other people's superannuated garments in which we were wont to see him clad, he wore a brand-new suit of broadcloth. A black cravat encircled his gnarled and ancient throat. In his hand he carried a glossy stove-pipe hat, with a crape band about it; and under his arm, an

oblong thickish parcel, neatly done up in a paper, and tied with pink twine ; while the badge and instrument of his profession, his accustomed pack, was nowhere to be seen. His countenance, as I have said, bespoke a deep and consuming melancholy.

"Why, Mr. Sonnenschein !" exclaimed my mother, starting up in alarm and advancing to meet him. "What has happened? What's the matter? Is—has—is Nettie—"

"No," he interrupted, with a solemn gesture and in a sepulchral voice. "No, it ain't Nettie. No, tank de Lord, it ain't so baid as dot. But it's fearful all de same. It's my brudder,—it's my brudder Shakie."

"What !" we all cried in concert. "He's dead ?"

"Yais," replied Mr. Sonnenschein, sinking into a chair, the picture of a man prostrated and undone by grief. "Yais, he's daid, my brudder Shakie's daid." After a brief pause, in a sudden passionate outburst : "Ach Gott, and ve vas tervins !"

He bowed his head, and for a little while his sorrow seemed to deprive him of the power of speech. The rest of us, too, kept silence. We were surprised to see him so painfully affected, but we were also very much impressed.

Presently he raised his head, and slowly, in a shaken voice, went on : "Yais, Shakie's daid. It's about two monts ago already I got de news. Vail, it pretty nearly broke my heart. Him and me vas tervins. . . . Poor Shakie ! He vas an awful *goot*-hearted shentleman, and he hadn't oughter been taken away. Oh, vail, I suppose his time haid come. He vas fearful old ; and I guess maybe his time haid come. He couldn't expect to live foraiser ; his time haid come ; and so he haid to die. Vail, dis is a hart vorld ; an out-racheous hart vorld, dere's no two vays about it : but de Lord mait it, and I suppose he haid some reason it. *Boruch dajir emes !*" With that pious ejaculation,—Blessed be the Most High Judge,—he again bowed his head and held his peace.

Some minutes passed in unbroken silence. Then, all at once, Mr. Sonnenschein drew a deep, loud sigh and straightened up. He gave his shoulders a prodigious shrug, as if to shake off his spiritual burden ; he passed his hands over his face as if to wipe away the shadows that darkened it. . . . Abruptly, with a sudden change of mien and manner,—eyes lighted by their familiar happy smile,—voice vibrant with its familiar jubilant ring,—“ But I got de money,” he cried. “ I got terventy-nine tousand, seven hoonert and sixty

tollars ; and I've come ofer to haif you conkratulate me. I only got it de day before yesterday, or I'd haif come around sooner. I hope you von't mind, but I brought a couple bottles champagne along to celebrate mit. You folks, you been awful friendly to me fen I vas poor already, and you vas raikular customers of mine ; so, now I vas rich, I tought I like to give you a little treat."

With that he undid the mysterious paper parcel which we had noticed at his entrance, and produced surely enough a couple of bottles of champagne.

"Fill oop your glaisses," he urged. "Fill 'em oop. Don't be afraid of it. It's chenu-wine. Vail, here goes! *Shalom alechem!* Peace to you! Drink hearty. Dere's plenty more fere dot comes from."

The gayety of the company was speedily restored, and we drank to our old friend's prosperity with right good will.

"Yais," he said, smacking his lips upon a bumper of his wine, "I got de money de day before yesterday. I got a draift on de baining establishment of Schaumberg, Knaus, Bauer & Co., down in Villiam Street. I ain't haid it caished yet. Dere it is."

He had unbuttoned his coat and extracted from

its inside pocket a dilapidated leather wallet. Out of this he picked his draft and handed it to me for circulation around the table. The amount was, as he had said, \$29,760.

"Well, Mr. Sonnenschein," my father asked, "how do you propose to invest this money? Can I be of any assistance to you in attending to its investment?"

"Vail, no, I guess not, tank you," he returned. "It's awful *goot*-nechered of you to make de oaffer; but I guess not, tank you all de same. No; to tell you de honest troot, I don't make no investments of dot money; I keep de caish. You see, I vas a Schlemiel. Vail, a Schlemiel is a party who's bount to haif bait luck. Vail, if I put dot money in de baink, de first ting I know, de baink'll bust. Or else, if I buy stoacks mit it, de stoack company vill fail; or coverment boants, de coverment vill get into a var. If I put it in a mowgage on real estate, de title to dot real estate would be defaicted. Dere's no two vays about it. I vas a Schlemiel. No, sir, I don't make no investments of dot money; I be sure to lose it, dere ain't no use in talking. But I tell you fat I do. I tought it all ofer in my own mind, and now I tell you fat I do. To-morrer morning I go down-town, and I call at de office of Schaumberg, Knaus, Bauer

& Co., in Villiam Street, and I get dot draift caished,—hey? Vail, den I take dot caish baick oop-town again mit me; and I go to my friend Mr. Solomon Levinson, who keeps a second-haint clodings estaiblishment in de basement of de house I live in; and I aisk Mr. Levinson to put dot caish in his chenu-wine burglar-proof safe, and keep it for me,—you understand? Vail, den fen me and Nettie needs some money, den I go to dot safe, and I take out a hoonert tollars,—you see de point? Tirty tousand tollars! My kracious, dot's enough to laist me and Nettie longer as ve eider of us lives; it is, honor bright. Ve ain't extraivagant, and ve ain't got no heirs to feel disappointed if ve don't leaf no fortune. No, sir; I vas a Schlemiel. I don't make no investments of dot money; I be sure to lose it. I keep de caish."

Unanimously and vehemently we protested against this course. We labored long and hard to convince him of its rash unwisdom. We assured him that of all the possible dispositions of his money which he could make, this was the wildest, the most hazardous; and we invoked every argument by which a reasonable human being could be moved to vindicate our proposition.

He heard us respectfully to the end, while a tolerant smile played about his lips. Then he rejoined,

"Dot's all right. Fat you folks say is shust exaictly so. You got an awful lot of sense about you, and you arkue simply splendid,—especially Saimmy. My kracious, if Saimmy vas to go to de laichislature, he'd make a chenu-wine sensation, he arkues so goot. He vas a necheral debater, dere's no two vays about it. But I tell you how it is. Dere's a proverb fich goes, 'Circumstainces alter cases.' Vail, dot's an aictual faict ; dey do, and no mistake. Vail, now I tell you how it is. You see, I vas a Schlemiel. Vail, a Schlemiel is a party who's bount to haif bait luck. Vail, if I make ainy investments of dot money, I be sure to lose it ; I vould, honor bright. So, I don't make no investments of it. I don't run no risks. I keep de caish."

So that, despite the splendor of our arguments, we might as well have addressed them to a stone post. Finally, in despair of reaching his intelligence, we appealed to his good nature, imploring him, if not for his own sake, if not for Nettie's, then for ours, to intrust the practical management of his inheritance to more experienced heads.

Again he heard us patiently to the end. Then he made answer, "You folks, you're awful friendly to take so much trouble on my account ; you simply are. And I'm fearful much obliged to you,

and so would Nettie be if she was here. But I tell you how it is. You see, I was a Schlemiel. Vail, if a party's a Schlemiel, dere ain't no use in talking, he's bound to have half-bait luck. Vail, if I invest dot money, I be absolutely sure to lose it, I would, and no mistake. So, I stay on the safe side. I don't run no risks. I keep de cash."

"Look here, Mr. Sonnenschein," my father said at last; "you buy government bonds with your money, and I'll insure you against all possible loss, by making myself personally responsible in case of anything happening. If the government gets into a war, or repudiates its debt, or if through any other cause the bonds shrink in value, I'll pay you from my own pocket the full amount of your losses. Come, that would render you perfectly secure."

"My gracious!" cried Mr. Sonnenschein. "Talk about *goot-necher*! Vail, dot beats de record. I never seen nobody so *goot-nechered* as you are in all my life before. It's wonderful, it simply is. I guess maybe you was about de *best-nechered* shentleman dot was ever born; I do, honor bright. But I tell you how it is. You see, I was a Schlemiel. Vail, if I invest dot money, I be sure to lose it whether or not, dere ain't no question about it. Vail, you don't suppose I want to make an old friend like you lose his

money too ! No, sir ; not much ; I ain't so mean as dot. But I tell you fat I do. I tought it all ofer, and now I tell you fat I mait oop my mind to do. I keep de caish. Mr. Levinson's burglar-proof safe is goot enough for me."

And so he went away, leaving us in an exasperated and anxious frame of mind. We tried hard to hope for the best ; but how could we help fearing the worst ? To invite disaster by keeping so large a sum of ready money lying exposed in another man's safe,—who but a Schlemiel could be guilty of such unmitigated folly ?

IV.

SCHLEMIEL'S PEN.

It was rather more than a week later that the post brought me one morning a letter, written in a cramped foreign hand, of which the following is a true and perfect copy :

" DIER SAMMY !

" ime Konfeint to de Haus bei a fieful Kolt an de het and Lonks and, i Kand go autt for fier i gett vurs But i leik, to sie You as i got a Fieful gut schoke to tell you and Den annyhau Ime lonsum and i leik to Sie you for Kumpny to schier Me up vel days ane ole vumin of de nehmer

rebekah doz our Haus vork for Us and her and nettie is Die onelie piepul i sie Ole Day so i gett Kein der Lonsum and i leik to sie you to tell You dat Schoke vel ittul mehk you Laff to dei sammy it vil and no mistek vel if a parties a Schlemiel day ant no Yous in toking Hies gott to haf bat luck. vel kum sie Me sammy for i gess Mabie mei time is com i do on a Brite, ime a fieful ole Gentulmin you no and de Doktor sais I Gott a bat kase Braun Kietiz, Kom sie me enyhau de Doktor sed, it ant Kesching. give my Lof papa and mama your

“Gut Frent

“E. SONNENSCHN !”

I found this epistle lying in wait for me on the breakfast-table. After I had made what sense of it I could, I passed it over to my mother, saying, “I’ll stop in and see him on my way down-town.”

“I’ll go with you,” my mother volunteered, some fifteen minutes later, after the sensation created by the exhibition to the rest of the family of Mr. Sonnenschein’s effort had subsided. “Poor old man ! Perhaps there’s something I can do to make him comfortable.”

So, together, my mother and I set out for Tompkins Square.

V.

SCHLEMIEL'S "SCHOKE."

Our greeting over, and our inquiries concerning the exact state of his health satisfactorily answered (he had indeed a bad cold, but was not nearly so ill as we had feared to find him): "Vail, now, Saimmy," began Mr. Sonnenschein, "as I told you a great mainy times already, dis is a vunderful world. By and by, fen you get so old as me, you'll say de same ting; dough now, file you're young, you might imachine dot I vas only fooling. My kracious, fen I tink about how vunderful it really is—vail, Saimmy, I'm aictually aistonished—vail, honor bright, I cain't hartly belief it. Vail, now look at here. I vas a Schlemiel, hey? Vail, a Schlemiel is a party who's bount to haif bait luck, ain't he? No matter fat he does, no maitter fat precowtions he takes, he cain't help it; he got to haif bait luck. Vail, now look at here. It's shust exaictly about two weeks ago already I got dot draift from de eggs-hecutor of my brudder Shaikie ofer in Chairmany. Vail, I guess maybe I told you I vasn't going to make no investments of dot money, becoase, as I vas a Schlemiel, I be sure to lose it. I guess maybe I told you I vas going to

keep de caish. Yais, I tought it all ofer, and I mait oop my mind dot I better stay on de safe side and keep de caish. Vail, now look at here. De very next day aifter I seen you, I vent down town to de office of Schaumberg, Knaus, Bauer & Co., in Villiam Street, and I got dot draift caished. I got terventy-nine vun-tousand-tollar pills, vun fife-hoonert-tollar pill, two vun-hoonert-tollar pills, and de ott sixty tollars in fifes and tens. Vail, Saimmy, den I done all dot money oop, except dose ott sixty tollars, fich I kep in my poacket, I done it all oop mit paper in a poontle, and I vent to my friend Mr. Solomon Levinson, who keeps a second-haint clodings estaiblishment down-stairs in de basement ; and I aisked Mr. Levinson to put dot poontle inside his chenuwine burglar-proof safe and keep it for me ; and Mr. Levinson he done it. He put it inside on de toap shelf, file I stood dere and seen him. Vail, Saimmy, Mr. Levinson he's got a lot of curiosity about him, fich is only necheral ; and, so, as I vas leafing, Mr. Levinson he aisked me if I haid and *op*-shections to informing him fat dot poontle contained. Vail, I tought to myself, ' I guess maybe I better not let nobody know how much money dere is in dot poontle ' ; so I said to Mr. Levinson, ' Fy, certainly, I ain't got no *op*-shections. It contains old loaf-letters.' Dot's fat

I said to Mr. Levinson. Vail, dot was pretty goot for an oaff-hainder, vasn't it, Saimmy? Vail, now look at here. Vail, I suppose you'd tink dere vasn't vun chaine in a hoonert tousand of ainy-dings haippening to dot money, now it vas loacked oop in Mr. Levinson's burglar-proof safe, wouldn't you, Saimmy? Vail, now look at here. Now you'll see shust exaictly how it is fen a party's a Schlemiel. You'll see fat a vunderful vorld dis is. Vail, de day Mr. Levinson put dot money inside his safe vas Friday. Vail, den it stainds to reason de next day vas Schabbas (Sabbath); don't it, Saimmy? Vail, maybe you wouldn't belief me—you might tink I vas trying to fool you,—but, honor bright,—I hope to die de next minute if it ain't a faict,—dot very same night,—Sotturday night,—aifter ve vas gone to bait,—vail, Saimmy, I bet you a brain-new fife tollar silk hat you cain't guess fat haippened. You take de bet? No? You gif it oop? Hey? Vail, now look at here. Dot very same night,—Sotturday night,—vail, Mr. Levinson he haid a fire in his estaiblishment, and my money got burned oop,—aifery red cent of it got burned to cinters!”

Of course we cried out in horror and consternation. But we had no words in our vocabulary eloquent enough to do justice to the catastrophe; and

we very soon relapsed into a dazed and helpless silence. Then Mr. Sonnenschein went placidly on : " Vail, it *vas* hart luck, outracheous hart luck, dot's an aictual faict. It vas raikular Schlemiel's luck, dere's no two vays about it. But fat could you expect ? It vas bount to haippen. I vas bount to lose dot money vun vay or anudder, dere ain't no use in talking. Vail, you've got to learn in dis world to take tings as dey come and part mit 'em as dey go ; dot's all dere is about it. Vail, now look at here. Now I tell you de particulars. Dem's de funniest part of de whole business."

The particulars were simple enough. Between eleven and twelve o'clock on Saturday night he and Nettie had been roused from their sleep by firemen breaking into their apartment and announcing that the house was afire. The firemen carried Nettie to the street, Mr. Sonnenschein following. The fire, it seemed, had started in Mr. Levinson's " estaib-lishment," and before it had gained much headway the firemen succeeded in putting it out. The tenants were then allowed to return to their beds. " Dot's how I caught dis case brownchitis, setting still outside dere in de street, fich vas fearful cold, mitout no clodings on to speak of, file de firemen dey put dot fire out." It never once entered Mr. Sonnenschein's head to fear that his fortune was in

danger, for " I tought of course it vas loacked oop in Mr. Levinson's chenu-wine burglar and fire-proof safe." But the next morning Mr. Levinson came to see him, and explained that, as his safe had been somewhat crowded with matter the day before, he had removed Mr. Sonnenschein's bundle of old letters and placed it in the cupboard of his writing-desk. " And den, of course, as I was a Schlemiel, dot estaiblishment haid to ketch fire, and dot writing-desk, mit aiferydings inside of it, get burned oop. Raikular Schlemiel's luck, ain't it, Saimmy? . . . Vail, aifter all, it don't make much difference. Fen I got dot money I mait oop my mind dot I'd retire from business, and be a shentleman of leisure. Vail, now I simply got to go baick into business again ; dot's all dere is about it."

VI.

SCHLEMIEL'S FRIEND.

My mother and I parted company at Mr. Sonnenschein's door, she to return home, I to pursue my downward journey to my office. As I walked along, however, an idea, a suspicion, began to wax strong in my mind ; dominated by which, I presently changed my course, and, entering the head-

quarters of the fire department, in Mercer Street, asked to see the Fire Marshal, Mr. Sparks, a gentleman with whom I was fortunate enough to have some personal acquaintance. Two minutes later he and I were closeted together.

"I dare say you remember a fire that occurred last Saturday night, up on Tompkins Square, in the shop of a second-hand clothing-dealer, named Levinson?" I inquired.

"Yes," the Fire Marshal answered. "I remember it."

"Well, would you mind telling me whether there was anything suspicious about it?—whether there were any circumstances to indicate that it was of incendiary origin?"

"Whenever a fire occurs in premises occupied by a gentleman of Mr. Levinson's race, class, and profession, I may say it is suspicious. Those low-class Polish Jews think no more of setting fire to a house, if they've anything to gain by it, than they do of lying. But in this particular case suspicion is disarmed by the fact that Levinson, strange to say, carried no insurance. So, you see, we have no evidence of motive. Why do you ask?"

"Well, I'll tell you. On the day before the fire, —that is, on Friday,—an old man named Sonnenschein deposited a very large sum of money—

thirty thousand dollars, indeed, in greenbacks—with this Levinson for safe-keeping. After the fire, Levinson claimed that Sonnenschein's money had been burned up. Now it occurred to me that perhaps Levinson had quietly pocketed the thirty thousand dollars, and then kindled the fire to account for its disappearance. If this supposition is reasonable, the fact that he carried no insurance doesn't signify."

"By Jupiter!" cried the Fire Marshal, thumping his desk. "That's the missing link. Tell me every detail of this transaction. I begin to see light."

I told him the whole story.

"Why, it's as clear as day," was his comment, when I had finished. "We'll have Levinson on his knees here before us within half an hour." And Mr. Sparks left the room.

When he came back, a minute or two later, he explained that he had sent a messenger to Mr. Levinson's place of business with an invitation to that worthy to favor the Fire Marshal with his company at once. "Now, you sit down behind this screen," he said to me, "where you can see without being seen. Levinson must fancy that he is alone with me. I think I can promise you some entertainment."

In due time the door opened, and Mr. Levinson was ushered in : a short, thick-set individual, with bushy black hair and beard, sallow complexion, and low, squat, oily features. His small black eyes darted inquiringly from side to side ; his fingers, fat and stubby, toyed with the brim of his hat ; and about his mouth flickered a conciliatory smirk. These low-class Polish Jews, as the Fire Marshal had called them, all look pretty much alike ; there is an astonishing poverty of types among them : take the first old-clothes or glass-put-in man who comes along, and he'll answer fairly well for Mr. Levinson. His age, I guessed, was in the neighborhood of forty-five. As for his person, it would have been base flattery to call it dirty. It was unspeakable. I could not help feeling that by its presence it soiled the atmosphere of the room ; and I breathed with a poor relish as long as Mr. Levinson and I remained within hearing distance of each other.

"Levinson," began Mr. Sparks, in a tame and business-like tone of voice, "you are under arrest for the crime of arson in the first degree. I've found out all about that little fire of yours ; I know just how, when, and why you started it. Setting fire to an occupied dwelling-house in the night time constitutes, as I say, arson in the first degree,

the penalty for which is imprisonment for life. You remember the case of Perlstein, Bernstein, and Cohen Davis, don't you, Levinson? Well, here you've gone and got yourself into the same box with them. In a few days now you'll be keeping them company up in Sing Sing. Well, twenty-nine thousand seven hundred dollars is a comfortable sum of money, but hardly worth imprisonment for life, I should think. And then, you did the job so clumsily. You gave yourself dead away, and assured your own conviction. I don't think I ever saw a worse piece of work, Levinson. You ought to have waited a month or so at least. The money would have kept, and your risk of getting caught would have been infinitely diminished. But it's too late now, Levinson, and there's no use repining. You were in a hurry, you were careless, and so—here you are. You've made your own bed, and now you've got to lie in it. I shall send you from here straight down to the Tombs. You'll come up for trial on Monday morning; and on Tuesday you'll take the train for Sing Sing, to stay there the rest of your life. The officer is waiting for you in the next room with his handcuffs. Before I turn you over to him, have you anything you wish to say?"

"Ach Gott, Fire Marshal!" cried Levinson,

whose sallow skin (as I could see through a convenient crack in the screen behind which I was in ambush) had turned several shades sallow, and whose frame was shaking as if with cold. "For Gott's sake, Fire Marshal, don't be so hart mit me. Dot fire, I couldn't help it, it vas an occident, so help me Gott. Ach, Fire Marshal, tink of my vife and children. Don't be so hart. Ach, Fire Marshal, for de love of Gott, don't say Sing Sing."

"*You* ought to have thought of your wife and children, Levinson. You ought to have thought of them before you started the fire. You didn't give much thought to the other people's wives and children, who were sleeping in that house, and who might have been burned to death, did you, Levinson? It's too late now. You know the law."

"But, my Gott, Fire Marshal, it vas such a leettle fire, and all in my own place of business. You wouldn't ponish a man for a leettle fire like dot, de same as if de whole house burned down. For Gott's sake, Fire Marshal, dot would be too hart."

"It wasn't your fault, Levinson, that the whole house didn't burn down. It might have done so. As I said, lives might have been lost, in which

case you'd have been hanged. No, there's no hope for you. State Prison for life will be your sentence."

"Ach, Fire Marshal, you're a good-natured man. Ach, I wouldn't belief you could be so hart. If anudder man told me you could be so hart, I wouldn't belief him. Ach, for Gott's sake, Fire Marshal, don't say Sing Sing. Ach, for Gott's sake, help me. I never done nodings of de kind before. Help me, Fire Marshal; Gott vill revard you for it."

"Well, Levinson, if you want me to help you, first of all tell me this: what have you done with the money?"

As sudden as a flash, a look of blank incomprehension shot over Levinson's face. "Money?" he repeated, in a puzzled key. "Money? What money?"

"Look here, Levinson," cried the Marshal, sternly, "I'll have none of that. If you are not frank with me, I'll turn you over to my officer at once. If you want me to help you, you must tell me the whole truth freely. Now, what have you done with the twenty-nine thousand dollars that old Sonnenschein left with you, to keep for him?"

"Ach, Fire Marshal, you're de hartest man I

ever seen. You're fearful hart. What I done mit dot money? Good Gott, what should I do mit it? I kep it, Fire Marshal. I got it yet. I got it in my store."

"Well, now, Levinson, I'll tell you what I'll do. You refund every penny of that money instantly, and I'll do as much as I can to have them let you down easily."

"Every penny! Ach, Fire Marshal, for Gott's sake, don't talk like dot. Don't say every penny. I'm a poor man, Fire Marshal; I am, so help me Gott. You don't want to ruin me, Fire Marshal. You can't be so hart as dot. Say half, Fire Marshal. Say fifteen tousand dawllars, and I do it."

"Look here, Levinson; I told you I'd have no fooling. You'll refund every penny of that money, or you'll go to State Prison for life. And you've got to make your choice quickly, too. I'm tired of beating about the bush. Will you or will you not go with me now to your store, and put every dollar of that money into my hands? I want an immediate answer."

"Good Gott!" cried Levinson, fairly writhing in anguish. Then, "Well, Fire Marshal, come along."

A procession was formed, Mr. Levinson and the Marshal leading, a policeman and myself bringing

up the rear. In this order we marched to Levinson's shop.

Levinson handed a paper parcel to Mr. Sparks. We examined its contents. They were: twenty-nine one-thousand-dollar bills, one five-hundred-dollar bill, and two one-hundred-dollar bills, thus answering accurately to Mr. Sonnenschein's description.

"Now, officer," said the Marshal, addressing the policeman, "take this gentleman to the Tombs. Good-by, Levinson. I'll see you later."

A few days afterward, by the Fire Marshal's intercession, Levinson was allowed to enter a plea of guilty to a minor degree of arson; and the court sentenced him to confinement at hard labor in the State Prison for a term of ten years.

VII.

SCHLEMIEL'S GRATITUDE.

Mr. Sparks and I climbed upstairs to Mr. Sonnenschein's tenement.

"Vail, my kracious, Saimmy, fat brings you baick again so soon?" was the old man's greeting.

As briefly and as clearly as I could I explained what had happened since my former visit.

"*Mein Gott!* You don't mean it!" he cried, when I had done. "Go 'vay. You don't really mean it! Mr. Levinson, he set fire to dot establishment, and you got baick de money? Vail, if I aifer? Vail, dot beats de record; it does, and no mistake. Talk about brains! Fy, Saimmy, smartness ain't no vord for it. You got vun of de graindest haits on your shoulders de Lord aifer mait. And Mr. Levinson, he aictually set fire to dot establishment, so as to get my money! Vail, dot *was* outracheous, dere ain't no use in talking. Vail, Saimmy, I cain't hardly belief it; I cain't, honor bright."

The marshal was busy with pen and ink at a table hard by, drawing up an affidavit and a receipt for Mr. Sonnenschein to sign and swear to. After the old man had laboriously traced his name and vouched for the truth of what was written above it, the Marshal handed him the bundle containing his inheritance, and, covered with thanks from both of us, went away.

"Vail, now, Saimmy," said Mr. Sonnenschein, "now I tell you fat you do. You cairry dot poontle down-town mit you, and you go to your popper's office, and you gif it to him, and you tell

him to make all de investments of dot money fih he likes. Dere's no two vays about it, Saimmy, I vas a raikular Schlemiel ; and I guess maybe de best ting I can do is to let your popper mainage dot money shust exaictly as if it vas his own. No maitter fat investments he makes of it, Saimmy, I tell you vun ting, I bet a hat dot vun vay or anudder dot money gets lost inside six monts. Vail, Saimmy, as I told you a great mainy times before already, dis is a fearful funny vorld ; and I guess maybe now, aifter dis fire and aiferydings, I guess maybe you'll belief me."

My father made such investments of "dot money" as would yield Mr. Sonnenschein an annual income of fifteen hundred dollars, which the old gentleman, still hale and hearty, is enjoying to this day. Though a Jew by birth and faith, he is as good a Christian as most of the professing ones ; for after he learned of Levinson's imprisonment he insisted upon making a liberal provision for Mrs. Levinson and her children. Nor is ingratitude a vice that could justly be attributed to our Schlemiel. When my parents celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of their wedding, a few months ago, they received by express a large and luminous worsted-work picture, enclosed by a massive gilt frame, which represented in the

primary colors the nuptial ceremonies of Jacob and Rachel. A card attached informed them that it came with compliments and best wishes from Mr. Sonnenschein and Nettie, and on the obverse of the card, in Mr. Sonnenschein's chirography, we read, "Nettie dun it Ole herself."

But his continued prosperity has undermined the old man's philosophy and upset all his established views of life. He calls at my father's office to receive his allowance on the first day of every month. "Vail, ainydings haippened yet?" is the inquiry with which he invariably begins. And when my father replies that nothing has happened, and proceeds to count out his money, "Vail, *Gott in Himmel*, fat kind of a vorld is dis, ainyhow!" he cries. "I gif it oop. I cain't make haits or tails of it. Here I been a Schlemiel aifer since I vas born already, and now all of a sudden I change ofer, and I ain't no Schlemiel no more, Vail, dot beats me,—it beats me all holler, and no mistake about it. But de Lord done it, and I guess maybe he's got some reason for it. Blessed be de name of de Lord!"

LILITH.

STRAHAN, the deaf-mute sculptor, is famous now ; but at the time with which we are concerned he was still struggling in obscurity. He lived and had his studio in an abandoned stable, which stood by itself, midway between Ninth and Tenth avenues, on Ninety-fourth Street—a rickety wooden structure, one story high, hot to suffocation in summer, and in winter justifying the traditional smile : as cold as a barn. But the rent was low, and the light was good ; and Strahan, considering everything, thanked his stars that he had any roof at all, under which to sleep and to do his work ; for, like the better part of his fellow-craftsmen, Strahan was poorer than a church-mouse.

Toward dusk one Christmas Eve Strahan sat among his plaster casts, prey to a swarm of blue devils—voracious parasites, that gnaw with peculiarly sharp teeth when the heart they are attacking happens to be associated with an empty stomach. Strahan's stomach was empty, and so

was his pocket-book. He had made up his mind that he would have to go supperless to bed this Christmas Eve ; and now, while the dusk deepened, he sat alone in his studio, and mused upon many a cheerless theme.

Of course ere long it got dark ; and then in due time the street-lamp in front of Strahan's door was lighted. The light flared in through the window, and sported fantastically with the white paraphernalia of the sculptor's trade ; but Strahan paid no heed. In spirit he was far away, laboring through the slough of despond. His material envelope remained where he had left it, fixed and motionless, like its plaster neighbors. How long this state of things lasted, I do not know, nor does it matter. Long enough, I dare say, to chill the poor fellow's heart through, and long enough, certainly, to chill his body through ; for, by and by, he shuddered and got up and crossed over to his stove. But his stove was cold ; the fire in it had gone out. Finding which to be the case, Strahan raised the lid of his coal-bin, and looked in. There was just light enough for him to see that his coal-bin was bare. Then he went to the door, opened it, and stepped into the street.

The day had been mild—sky overcast, wind from the southeast, and atmosphere charged with luke-

warm moisture. But now the wind had veered around into the northwest, and it was rapidly blowing up cold. The clouds had scattered; the air had become dry and stinging; a million stars were shining overhead; in the unpaved roadway the mud was freezing. Strahan stepped into the street, and stayed there till his observations of the weather were complete. After that, he returned in-doors.

The condition of affairs was grave. A cold snap and an empty coal-bin formed the most disastrous of combinations. Not that Strahan minded the cold much on his own account—he could move about and keep warm. But his Lilith—she upon whom he had lavished his thought, his love, his strength, his skill, for a year past—she who was the food of his ambition, the fountain of his hope—to her cold might mean nothing short of absolute ruin. She was still in clay—not yet quite ready to have her mold taken in plaster—and if the clay should freeze, as it surely would, in this refrigerator of a studio, unless there was a fire, if the clay should freeze—! Strahan did not allow the appalling notion to assume definite shape. He picked up the tattered bushel-basket which in his domestic equipment answered for a coal-hod, donned his ancient wide-awake hat, and

set out for the grocer's shop. He already owed the grocer a snug sum for fuel; and it never occurred to him that that worthy might prove unwilling to add another item to the account.

The grocer sat comfortably behind his counter, reading a German newspaper and smoking a German pipe. As the bell over the door tinkled at Strahan's entrance, the grocer lowered his newspaper, and glanced up. But when he saw who the new-comer was, and recognized the familiar outlines of the coal-basket, he pursed his lips, knitted his brows, shook his head, and gesticulated deprecatingly with his hands.

Though the significance of this pantomime was unmistakable, it failed of its effect. Strahan, not to be dismayed, drew a pencil from his pocket, took a scrap of wrapping-paper from the counter, scribbled a word or two upon it, and handed the paper to the grocer.

"Coals—please," was what Strahan had written.

The grocer in his turn produced a pencil, and wrote by way of rejoinder, "Got enny munny."

Despite the absence of interrogation-point, Strahan construed this to be a question, and made a sign in the negative.

Again the grocer shook his head and waved his hands.

"Do you mean," wrote Strahan, "that you will not trust me for a basketful?"

The grocer nodded.

"Why not?" wrote Strahan.

"\$7.50," wrote the grocer, alluding doubtless to the amount of Strahan's present score.

"I shall surely receive some money this coming week," wrote Strahan, "and then I'll settle with you. You must let me have coals to-night, or else my work will be destroyed. Please let me have them."

Strahan's eyes—eager as the eyes of dumb persons are wont to be—devoured the grocer's face, as the latter scanned this appeal.

For a third time the grocer shook his head and waved his hands. But this time he did more. He pointed impatiently toward the door.

Strahan took the hint. Outside, he cast a covetous glance upon the grocer's securely padlocked coal-box. If he that looketh upon another's goods to lust after them hath already committed robbery in his heart, Strahan at that moment sank to the level of a pickpocket.

Back in his studio, he realized that the condition of affairs was now worse than grave. It was getting desperate. The wind kept freshening, the cold intensifying. Strahan had not a

penny in his purse, nor an object in his possession which might be exchanged for money at the pawn-shop. To the other grocers of the quarter, he was a stranger. He could expect no credit from them. Yet it behooved him to kindle a fire at once, and to keep it going at least till morning. Otherwise—!"

His Lilith stood in the center of the floor, shrouded in damp cloths. Impulsively, he put out his hand to caress her. Horror! The cloths were already beginning to congeal!

He looked about the room. What had he there that might be converted into fire-wood! Little enough, forsooth. The coal-basket itself—a chair with a broken back—a wash-stand; these were all. His bedstead was of iron. But quick as thought these were reduced to splinters; and into the stove they went. Strahan applied a match. Presently a lusty fire was waking the echoes up the chimney.

But this was merely a makeshift. Lilith's peril was not averted: she had obtained a short reprieve. An hour or two at the furthest, and the last of the embers would die, and the cold come swooping down again upon her, fiercer than before. But in an emergency, to gain time is something. In this hour or two much might be accomplished.

Within a couple of hours, if all went well, Strahan would be able to reach the abode of his old pupil, Walter Everett, borrow a dollar from him, get back home, and, recruited by coals purchased with ready money, dare the elements to do their worst.

Everett dwelt over in Sixty-third Street, east of Lexington Avenue. Strahan followed a diagonal course across Central Park. The full moon was set like a splendid topaz in the dark vault of the sky. The naked twigs of the trees, coated with ice, sparkled diamond-fashion in the wind. All the air shimmered with a frosty, mystic light. The cold was piercing, and Strahan was thinly clad ; but he walked briskly, and, between exercise and excitement, managed to keep tolerably warm. In less than five-and-forty minutes, he had pulled Everett's bell.

A maid answered it.

Strahan fished a pad of paper from out the depths of his pocket, and with stiffened fingers scrawled, "Is Mr. Walter Everett at home?"

The maid read the question, eyed the dumb and shabby visitor with suspicious curiosity, and at length said, "Yes."

Strahan watched her lips and understood.

"Then," he wrote, "please say that Mr. Strahan would like to see him."

The maid left Strahan standing in the hall, and went upstairs. By and by, coming back, she signaled to him to enter the parlor. Then, having lit the gas, she handed him a note, and vanished. The note ran thus :

“ Dear Strahan : Merry Xmas ! Delighted that you have hunted me up. Am dressing for a party. Will be with you inside of ten minutes. Meanwhile, sit down and make yourself monarch of all you survey. W. E.”

Strahan sat down, and tried to be patient. Ten minutes ! And each of them infinitely precious ! He wondered how much headway his fire would make in ten minutes ! What if it should burn itself out sooner than he had counted ! What if, when he regained his studio, he should find that the dreaded mischief had been wrought ! The misgiving made his flesh creep. He strove to silence it, by rising and pacing restlessly to and fro. It was quite twenty minutes before Everett appeared.

The pair shook hands. A sharp contrast they presented : the one appropriately shorn and shaven, in spotless linen and glossy broadcloth—a picture of health, prosperity, and well-being ; the other out at elbows, sallow, unkempt, ill-fed, with long disheveled hair and tangled beard—a typical

pilgrim from the shady by-ways of Bohemia. At Munich they had been contemporaries, and Everett had hired Strahan to give him a few lessons in modeling, though his regular courses were in painting. Everett had a rich father, but dubious talents. Strahan had plenty of talent, but no father. To Everett Art had been a mistress; he had forsworn her, and espoused Law. To Strahan Art was a wife; he had remained faithful to her, up to the brink of starvation. True, Everett had furnished an æsthetic studio at the top of the house, where he still dabbled with his paints on Sundays. On Sundays Strahan put by his modeling-tools, and sold walking-sticks to the crowd on Fifth Avenue: thereby acquiring the wherewithal to carry him through the week.

Everett, who had learned to express himself with some fluency in the finger alphabet, demanded, "Well, Strahan, how are you getting on?"

"Oh, so-so," was Strahan's answer. "And you?"

"First rate," signed Everett. "Beastly cold outside, isn't it."

"Bitter," assented Strahan.

"Well, to-morrow being Christmas, it's no more than we're bound to expect. Hard at work, I suppose?"

"Yes. My Lilith is nearly finished."

"Good! What are you going to have her done in—bronze or marble?"

"Plaster for the present."

"Oh, well, she'll keep. You can put her into bronze after you get rich. But why don't you sit down? Sitting's as cheap as standing."

"No, thank you; I won't sit down. The fact is, I'm in something of a hurry. I called—I hate to bother you, but I need it very much—I called to ask if you would be kind enough to lend me a dollar."

"Kind enough! A dollar? Why, man, I'll be delighted. I'll lend you ten, if you want them."

"Oh, no, thanks. I shall have some money coming in next week. One will be ample, if you can spare it."

"Take this anyhow," said Everett, and thrust upon the applicant a five-dollar bill.

When Strahan bade Everett good-bye, which he did as soon as decency would permit, he saw by the clock on the parlor mantel that it was half-past nine—nearly an hour and a quarter, he calculated, since he had left his studio. Dread sat heavily upon his heart, as he pursued his march back. He ran till his breath gave out: then he lapsed into a rapid walk. It was colder than ever. The

mercury, he guessed, had fallen to the neighborhood of zero. (The papers, next day, reported that it had fallen to 1° below.) The moon itself looked pinched and shriveled. The moonlight seemed like a vaporized form of ice. Strahan's breath condensed and froze upon his beard. His imagination acted as though bewitched. Ghastly visions of Lilith in ruins kept hovering before him, and turning his blood to water. These alternated with dazzling flashes of hope, which, by the force of contrast, only served to aggravate his suffering.

Strahan had got about half-way through the park—was trudging along a narrow foot-path, hedged on either side by leafless bushes—when he became aware that he was not the only pedestrian abroad in this quarter of the world : leading him by a rod or two, he could make out the form of a woman, clad in some light-colored stuff that fluttered in the wind and caught a silvery luster from the moon. She, like himself, appeared to be hastening onward at top speed. His interest followed in the track of his attention, and he fell to speculating languidly upon the possible nature of his traveling-companion's errand. He wondered with passive curiosity what she looked like, and what her condition in life might be, and, whether she

was poor and hungry and in distress, as he was. He noticed that, despite her haste, she advanced with somewhat uncertain footsteps, as though tired and weak. Once, indeed, she tottered, as if on the point of falling, but then recovered herself in time, and hurried on. By and by, a turn in the path shut her from his sight; and speedily whatever passing fancies she had aroused in his mind took themselves off.

But pretty soon he too had reached the turn in the path, around which the woman had disappeared. Mechanically he raised his eyes, and sought her figure. She was nowhere to be seen. He concluded that she had gained upon him, and got lost to view among the shadows ahead. Or had he unconsciously slackened his own pace, and lagged behind? Now, he consciously quickened it.

Next instant his foot struck violently against an obstacle on the ground—something soft and elastic, that would have felt like a mass of India-rubber, except for the strange, uncanny thrill which it sent darting up his leg. He looked downward. There before him, obliquely across the path, with the moon shining full upon her, lay—a woman: this was the obstacle that his foot had encountered—the woman, he had no doubt, who, a mo-

ment since, had been the subject of his idle speculations.

She was an old woman, with thin, gray hair, and a white, peaked face, to which the moonlight lent a greenish tinge. She wore an unseasonable gown of faded yellow calico, and had no wrap. Her eyes, though wide open, appeared fixed and sightless. A tiny stream of blood trickled from her forehead. Manifestly she had fallen, and hurt herself in doing so, and swooned. She was plainly unconscious.

A pitiable and sickening spectacle, all of which Strahan took in at a glance. And straightway there presented themselves for his selection the two horns of a maddening dilemma.

If he should go about his business, and leave that woman alone there in that unfrequented foot-path, with the temperature such as it was, she would certainly freeze to death; and he would be morally as bad as her murderer.

If, on the contrary, he should do what in common humanity he felt bound to do—take her upon his shoulders and bear her away to a place of warmth and shelter—if he should do this, in the meantime the fatal cold would surely, all too surely, force an entrance into his studio, and effect the irretrievable ruin of his Lilith. The destruction of Lilith would mean to Strahan not merely a year

lost from his life ; it would mean the extinction of the beauty that he had lovingly and laboriously wrought out of nothingness ; it would mean the blight of his sweetest hopes, the overthrow of his proudest castles in the air ; it would mean—God knows there is no telling all that it would mean. An artist's work is dearer to him than his dearest friend. It is breath of his nostrils, bone of his bone. To Strahan the destruction of Lilith would mean a pound of flesh cut nearest to his heart.

This was the dilemma that stared him mercilessly in the face, and woke a fierce, despairing pain in his breast. He begrudged even the time that was needed for its consideration. Every second was priceless to him now. And yet, he had to choose—choose between his darling Lilith and this unknown old woman.

Well, he thought he had made up his mind. The woman—she was old, she was poor, she was probably of slight value in the world—her death could not much matter—anyhow, her mishap was not his fault—wherefore should he treat it as his concern ?—perhaps somebody else would pass that way before it was too late ; perhaps—He threw out his arm, as if to ward off his more humane impulses, and turned his back upon her, and strode resolutely forward.

But he did not go far. A few yards, and he halted. His better instincts had revolted. There was a short but mighty battle. Strahan faced about.

No ; come what might, he could not find it in him to go away, and leave her to die there alone. Lilith's death-warrant was sealed. He faced about, recovered in a breathing-space the distance he had gained, whipped off his coat, wrapped it close around the old woman's body, lifted her tenderly in his arms, and started upon the shortest cut that he knew of, out of the park.

His progress was slow. The wind blew a gale in his teeth, and made it hard work to breathe. The old woman was an awkward burden. He had to stop every now and then, to shift her position and get a better purchase. Besides, cold, hunger, and anxiety had told upon his physical resources ; and he was not a muscular fellow at his best. His heart felt like a dead weight in his bosom. The pain in it had given place to a numb ache. His mental faculties, also, seemed to have lost their edge. His mind had fed upon the thought of Lilith's doom, until it could hold no more, and had sunken into a torpor. He labored along, conscious of little save his bodily discomfort. The wind cut his cheeks ; his arms were cramped ; and he had to pant for breath.

But at last he left the park behind him—came out upon Eighth Avenue at Eighty-fifth Street. He looked up and down for a lighted window. There was none in sight. The few, straggling shops of the neighborhood had been closed. Where should he go? What should he do?

All at once he remembered that there was a police station in Eighty-seventh Street. He quickened his gait, and ere long had reached the station house.

The hands of the station-house clock marked a quarter toward eleven when Strahan entered. They marked a quarter past eleven before he got away. To begin with, the officer in charge consumed an eternity in telegraphing for an ambulance; and then another eternity was wasted while he required Strahan to write out a statement of exactly where, when, and how he had fallen in with the woman, and to subscribe and swear to it with due solemnity.

But finally Strahan was free. He did not tarry to learn the extent of the old woman's injuries. She was still unconscious, when he left. As he cleared the station-house vestibule a terrible hope sprang to life within him. He had not been absent more than three hours altogether. Perhaps—perhaps, his fire had lasted longer than he had thought it

would ! Certainly the fire's warmth had outlasted the fire itself. Perhaps it was not yet too late !

He ran. Hope endowed him with fresh vigor. He ran at break-neck speed up Eighth Avenue. He turned into Ninety-fourth Street. Yes—thank God !—the grocer's shop on the corner was still open. Into the grocer's shop, like a madman, he dashed. A few frantic gestures, a fluttering five-dollar bill—and again he was in the street, now bearing a great bucketful of coal and kindling-wood.

But before his studio door he halted and hesitated. Hope and courage suddenly forsook him. He was afraid to enter—afraid to lift the curtain and confront the truth. The probabilities had now reversed themselves in his mind. Three hours, three mortal hours ! In that time what a vast tragedy the cold had had leisure to enact. His eyesight penetrated the solid wall of the house and beheld within a scene of nameless havoc. But his hesitation was short-lived. It yielded to the stolidity of despair. He unlocked the door and crossed the threshold. As he did so a gust of wind extinguished the flame in the lamp-post on the curbstone.

It was pitch dark inside, and, as Strahan took

quick note, colder even than without—cold in a more aggressive and assertive way. But he did not falter. He had resolved to face the worst, whatever it might be ; and at once he set about doing so.

He scratched a match, waited for the sulphur to burn away, then lighted a candle fastened in a rough candlestick that he himself had modeled of clay. He watched the flame leap up, die down, again struggle up, and become clear and steady. He raised the candle aloft, fortified himself with a deep breath, turned around, and looked at Lilith.

To all appearances she remained exactly as he had left her—unchanged—a bundle of white cloths. He stretched forth his hand and placed it upon her shoulder. The cloths were frozen as hard as iron.

These must be thawed out, first of all.

He went to his stove, and felt of it. The fire had evidently been dead a long while. The stove was stone-cold. He emptied into it the contents of his bucket, and touched the mass with his candle-flame. By and bye the heat began to tell. Lilith's cerements began to melt.

One by one, he stripped her of them. At last she stood before him, unveiled.

A superb piece of work, indeed, she was. Stra-

han had followed Rossetti's interpretation of the myth, and chosen to represent her at the moment of her expulsion from Eden. Her opulent hair flowed in wild disorder down her back. Her wide open eyes, her parted lips, her clenched fingers, her attitude at once terrified and defiant, all combined to express the despair and the fury of the scorned and forsaken woman. Paradise lay behind her, before her the unknown world, from which she shrank aghast. Her exquisitely modeled limbs were rigid with fear. All the sensuousness, all the passion, had vanished from her face : its beautiful features were eloquent of the woe, the hatred, and the horror that were burning in her heart.

But now, what a pitiful wreck she was ! At the touch of the cold, she had become a grim caricature of herself. The clay in freezing had, of course, expanded and contracted unequally. A deep fissure at the corner of her mouth stretched like a sabre-cut across her cheek, and gave her the semblance of grotesque laughter. Another fissure, starting just above her breast, ran zig-zag down her body, and disclosed the iron supports within. A third encircled her waist, like a girdle. Here and there the surface had begun to peel off in scales.

Strahan, for a while, stood petrified, staring at her with dull smitten eyes. Then he flung himself upon the floor ; and, dumb though he was, a deep moan burst from his throat.

The fire roared in the stove. The air of the room grew warmer and warmer. Clay in thawing undergoes a process of disintegration. Presently, with a soft thud, Lilith flattened herself out upon the ground.

* * * * *

In a letter written some ten months later Strahan says : “ At first I thought I should go mad. Weeks passed before I was able to begin to work. I tried again and again to get to work ; but it was no use. It seemed as though my powers had left me, never to come back. My hand had forgotten its cunning. I received some money about this time, and made up my mind to change my studio. I got settled in a new one toward the end of March, and started over again. Useless. My clay acted like a thing possessed. I was getting desperate, losing my self-respect. What a poor, incompetent, worthless thing I was, I thought. I wished I was dead. Why I did not kill myself I do not know. . . . But finally, late in April, I started the figure again. This time my skill seemed to be born anew. Ever since, I have been

hard, very hard, at work, so that within six weeks more I shall have the clay-model finished and ready for the caster. . . . Now what seemed less than a year ago an overwhelming calamity turns out to be a blessing ; for the new figure is vastly better than its predecessor—abler, more truthful, more sympathetic. So, the old woman was my benefactress, after all.”

Strahan's *Lilith* was exhibited the following spring. It made him famous.

MRS. ORMIZON'S DINNER PARTY.

IN Paris, shortly after our wedding—which was celebrated there in the autumn of 1885—"My dear," said old Dr. Marsac to Mrs. Ormizon, "I felicitate that lucky husband of yours from the bottom of my heart. Marriage, they say truly, is a lottery; but he has drawn a prize of the first order. He has obtained a wife at once young, witty, and beautiful; and I can promise him, moreover, that he will find you docile and obedient—virtues of the greatest rarity in young women nowadays. But ah, my Denise, I who know you from your cradle, I must warn him that you are not in the least practical. A sympathetic friend, a companion perfectly amiable and gentle, a spouse to do him honor in the world—all this he will possess in you. But a good manager, a skillful housekeeper—alas, no! You are too poetical, too romantic, too much of a dreamer. The material details of life are entirely lacking in interest for you."

The portly, purple-faced old gentleman smiled provokingly as he delivered this bit of persiflage,

which was also his valedictory, for we took ship for America three days later. The reproach sank deep into Denise's soul, and rankled there. No sooner were we alone than, giving her head an indignant little toss, "Ah," she cried, "I should like to show him! If only he would some time come to New York, I would show him whether I am good a manager, a good housekeeper—whether I am practical, indeed!"

"But he never will, you know," said I. "Your countrymen never travel."

I proved to be but a sorry prophet. Two years and a few months had elapsed when Denise received a letter from this unprecedented Frenchman, announcing that he, with his wife and daughter, had set forth upon a journey round the world! "We shall reach New York toward the middle of January, to stop there for a week or so before proceeding to cross the continent. We sail from Havre aboard the steamship *La Touraine*."

La Touraine was spoken off Sandy Hook on Wednesday evening, January the 18th. I learned as much from the next morning's paper. Thursday afternoon Denise and I paid our respects to the travelers at their hotel, the doctor having named the one at which he intended to put up.

"*Eh bien, mon cher,*" he asked of me, after he had

expatiated at sufficient length upon the horrors of the sea voyage, "and the little girl, how does she make out? She is always beautiful, always full of spirit, and younger, I avow, than ever. But,"—oscillating his hands upon his wrists, lifting his shoulders till they engulfed his neck, and elevating one eyebrow while he depressed the other—"but the *ménage*? The domestic economy? The affairs of the house? . . . Ah! poor man, I comprehend perfectly your lot. That good Denise was never practical. She could never interest herself in the material details of life."

I hastened to assure him that I stood in need of no commiseration. "As for my lot, none could be happier. The *ménage* in general runs as smoothly, as regularly, as if impelled by clockwork. The domestic economy—my word of honor, Monsieur le Docteur, Denise has the genius of a financier."

He shook his head incredulously. He eyed me with a perplexed and wondering gaze, as who should say, "*Mais, comment donc!* What kind of man is this?" He muttered,—with an intonation that signified, "It's quite impossible; but politeness requires that I should pretend to believe you,"—he muttered, "*Tiens! Vraiment? Ça m'étonne.*"

For the remainder of our visit, with pursed lips and knitted brow, he seemed to be revolving the anomaly in his mind. Just before we left, his face lightened. He had evidently found a solution. Putting his arm through mine, and leading me a little to one side, "Ah ! it's because you're still madly in love—*c'est que vous êtes toujours follement amoureux*," he remarked.

When we got home, Denise sat down at her writing-desk, and for quite an hour was busy with pen and paper, inking her fingers, disheveling her hair, and manifesting all the other symptoms of a feminine soul in the fine frenzy of literary composition. In the end, she said, "There ! I have written a letter to Dr. Marsac, asking him and Madame and Marie to come and dine with us on Monday evening. I have written him the very nicest letter I possibly could ; and now I will get him up *such* a dinner ! Now he shall see whether I am practical or not."

"Let me read it," said I.

"Oh, I have sealed it," said she. "And now you must run out and post it."

Herein, I tell her, lay the cause of all her subsequent trouble. If she had been mindful of her obligations as a married woman, and shown her epistle to me, her husband, for inspection and ap-

proval, before sealing it, the humiliating catastrophe which I am going to describe would never have come to pass. But she pursued her own undutiful course, and retribution very properly overtook her. The spirit of poetic justice has not finally departed from this world, after all.

Well, in due course of the mails a letter of acceptance reached us from the Marsacs ; and then, bright and early Monday morning, Mrs. Ormizon opened the campaign preliminary to the engagement of the evening. She hired a charwoman to come and assist our maid-of-all-work in the task of putting our flat in spick and span condition. Of course, they began by turning it topsy-turvy, and rendering it as uninhabitable as an ice-box, with cold draughts chasing each other from window to window, and dust fairly saturating the air. She pressed poor Dr. Gluck—Isabel B. Gluck, M.D., our boarder—into the service, and kept her busy cleaning and arranging bric-à-brac all the forenoon. She routed me out of my study, and had that apartment swept. Then she marched me back into it, with directions to clear up the litter on my writing-table—an Herculean labor, for there lay the pell-mell accumulations of I know not how many months. It was in vain that I rebelled, protested, entreated ; in vain that I had

recourse to her native tongue, reminding her that

“Souvent un beau désordre est un effet de l'art”;

in vain that I appealed against being constrained to lose an entire day's work—which meant the addition of a precise fraction of my income to the expense entailed by the dinner itself. She was relentless. “Clear up your table, sir. I cannot allow people to imagine that chaos like that is tolerated within my jurisdiction.” She forced us to eat our luncheon an hour earlier than usual, when we had no appetite; and a hasty, scrappy luncheon it was at that. Then, as the dinner was to be served an hour later than usual—namely, at seven instead of six—we passed—at least, I passed—a long, miserable, hungry afternoon. At about two o'clock Denise marshaled her corps of assistants, Dr. Gluck, the charwoman, the salaried domestic, and withdrew into the kitchen. There they remained in secret session until after dark; and thence from time to time escaped suggestive whiffs of cookery, tantalizing enough to a famished man.

All this while, be it remembered, I was engaged over my writing-table, working hard to raze the paper mountain range that it supported; a range of very composite formation; loose pages of manuscript, sheets of proof, scraps of memoranda, let-

ters answered and unanswered, bills *ditto*—in a word, all sorts and conditions of paper, not excepting cigarette paper, tumultuously heaped together, which had to be examined, sorted, preserved, destroyed. I had at last finished the business, and was solacing myself with a game of patience, when Denise appeared suddenly in the doorway, and, beckoning with her finger, pronounced a single word: "Come." She led me to the threshold of the dining-room, and, pointing to the table, pronounced another: "Look." Her voice thrilled with pride, and well it might; for—what with its snowy linen, its sparkling glass and silver, its centerpiece piled high with fruit, its vases full of roses, all glowing in the soft light of seven candles, fixed in a beautiful old-fashioned candelabrum that my wife had inherited from her French grandfather—the table was indeed a lovely sight. After I had looked my fill, and expressed my admiration by word and deed, she, still blushing from the operation, said, "Now go dress."

At five minutes before seven we assembled in the parlor, Dr. Gluck, Denise, and I. The guests might arrive at any instant now. We had on our best clothes, of course, and we sat around in an uneasy, solemn, expectant silence. It was the lull between the storms. After the fatigues of the

day, and prior to the fatigues of the evening, in these few quiet moments we would rest, we would recuperate, we would store up strength and courage for the fray. But, as I say, we were preternaturally solemn, and not perfectly at ease. I hate my dress-suit, and am never happy in it. I had to keep wriggling my neck, to relieve the discomfort occasioned to it by my high standing collar. Miss Gluck procured a book from the table, and made believe she was reading in it. I could see that she was only waiting. Denise got up and moved about the room, giving a touch here and there to the draperies. I followed her with my glance, and thought how well she was looking. She wore a gown of wine-colored silk, trimmed with black lace, exceedingly becoming to her pale complexion; lights like stars shone in the depths of her brown eyes; and through the dark coils of her hair was shot an arrow of translucent amber.

Whir-r-r—ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding—seven. The clock that Dr. Gluck had given us for a wedding present briskly rang out the hour.

The doctor turned a page in the book she was pretending to read. Denise dropped upon a chair. I drew a long breath, and gave my neck one last lingering twist. We all became a trifle

more solemn, a trifle more rigid than before. The decisive moment was at hand. From second to second we awaited the clang of the door-bell. The silence was intense. You could have heard a mouse walk across the carpet. The clock had the floor undisputedly to itself. It ticked cheerfully.

"Stephen, your necktie is crooked," said Denise.

I hurried to a mirror and adjusted it. Then I resumed my seat; and the stillness was restored. Tick-tack, tick-tack, went the clock.

"Well, I wonder why they don't come," ventured Dr. Gluck, at five minutes past the hour.

"Oh, we must give them some minutes' grace," Denise responded. "French people are never so punctual as others."

"And then, besides," I added, "they're strangers in a strange land. They may have some trouble finding the place."

"Why, they'll come in a carriage, won't they?" the doctor queried. "They're awful swells, you know."

After which we relapsed into our former silence.

At ten minutes past seven, "Well, it *is* funny they don't come," Denise admitted. "I *hope* they have not lost their way." And she went to the bay-

window, and stood there looking down into the street.

By a quarter past the hour, we had all become rather fidgety.

"I propose that we sit down and eat our dinner," said the master of the house. "I've had nothing to eat since noon, and I didn't get anything to brag of even then. I shall die of starvation if I have to go hungry much longer. The first commandment in the Book of Etiquette is to observe religiously the hour and minute of a dinner. These people deserve a lesson. Shall I tell Mary to put on the soup?"

But, of course, the master of the house was promptly snubbed, and his proposition contemptuously scouted, by his female subjects.

At twenty minutes past seven we got a false alarm. We heard the click of the elevator door, out in the hall. That meant that the elevator had stopped at our floor. "Ah, at last, here they are," was our common thought; and we quickly resumed our company manners, which we had some time since put aside. In breathless suspense we anticipated the ringing of the door-bell. But time passed, and it didn't ring. Gradually we sank back into our former state of moral relaxation.

There are few experiences in this life more try-

ing to the nerves than waiting. Everybody can bear witness to the truth of that assertion. Even under the most favorable conditions waiting is bad enough. But waiting while the pangs of hunger gnaw your vitals, and odors of delicious edibles spice the air, it is too much for flesh and blood. My mouth was watering. The void within me ached. "Well, I can't and *won't* stand this any longer," I broke out at half-past seven. "I shall either go mad or die. Now, then, Mrs. Ormizon, it's for you to choose. Do you wish to see me fall dead at your feet, or become a raving maniac under your very eyes, or will you have the dinner served at once?"

"Oh, no," poor Mrs. Ormizon pleaded, "we *must* wait a little longer. But why do zey not come? Sawm sing must 'ave 'appened."

Ordinarily my wife's foreign accent is scarcely perceptible, but at moments of emotional disturbance—when she is distressed, delighted, angered, bored, deeply touched, especially amused—when, in brief, her emotional equilibrium is in any wise deranged—it betrays itself. At these junctures she has difficulty with her th's; and, as is frequently the case with French people, her aspirates develop an alarming cockney-like tendency to misplace themselves.

"Well, I think they're unpardonably rude," put in Dr. Gluck. She had discarded her book, and her foot was beating a tattoo upon the carpet.

"Well, I'll wait just five minutes longer, and not another second," I concluded, taking out my watch and holding it open in my hand.

But at the expiration of those five minutes Denise wrung from me five minutes more. And so, to cut a long story short, so it went on, in stretches of five minutes each, until the clock struck eight. Meanwhile, the vital question, "Why don't they come?" we had debated from every point of view. Of course something must have happened; but what? And why didn't they send us word of any sort? We exhausted ourselves in futile speculations. Possibly they had lost our address; that was exceedingly improbable, for to our certain knowledge they had at least three separate copies of it—Denise's note of invitation, her visiting-card, and my visiting-card, not to mention letters containing it which they had received before they left France; but, even assuming that they *had* lost it, they needed only to look in the Directory to find it again. Our frame of mind was anything but amiable. It is well that they did not hear some of the remarks we made about them.

"Oh, dear," sighed madame at the eighth

stroke, "I suppose it is useless to wait any longer, but—but I sink—it is perfectly cruel of zem."

There were tears in her voice, and no wonder. Her disappointment must have been bitter indeed. So much labor lost ! So much hope, so much ambition, come to naught ! It was too bad. Our hearts were moved to pity—Dr. Gluck's and mine. The doctor tried to comfort her. "Never mind, dear. *They're* the losers, you know." But her face continued to wear a look of sorrow and vexation ; while I, contemplating Dr. Gluck's observation by the light of the facts, thought in my sordid soul how false was the old commonplace, the loser *pays*. We passed gloomily through the folding-doors that led from the parlor into the dining-room, and silently arranged ourselves around the table.

Ah, but the dinner ! It is not for nothing that Gallic blood pours through the veins of Mrs. Ormizon. The dinner was superb, it was exquisite, it was a dream, it was a triumph of art. Nothing gastronomical could have surpassed it, unless its own younger self. An hour earlier it had doubtless been a degree lovelier ; but even at its advanced age, when the fire and flavor of youth were perhaps somewhat spent, it was a dinner to

consume with rapture, to remember with wistful regret. Its excellence lay not in its substance chiefly, but in the indescribable atmosphere that attached to it, in the magical and impalpable bouquet that it had caught from Mrs. Ormizon's fingers. It was not exclusively a French dinner; it was cosmopolitan. The culinary science of Germany, that of the Jewry, and that of America, as well as that of France, were impartially represented; yet the whole had a delectable French twang. To name its constituent parts would serve no purpose. Suppose that I wished to convey to you an adequate conception of the witchery of a certain beautiful woman whom I know, and to inspire in your bosom the worshipful admiration which I deem her due; by printing here a catalogue of her features—by informing you that she possesses hair, a forehead, eyes, a nose, lips, a chin, etc., etc.—should I accomplish my aim? Why then should I bewilder you with an enumeration of the good things that went to make up Mrs. Ormizon's dinner? To say that we began with the succulent oyster, and in smooth and leisurely succession proceeded through sardellen paste on toast, broth of clams, broiled lobster, sweet-bread patties, filet of beef with fresh mushrooms, string beans, canvas-back duck, salad with *vinaigre à*

l'estragon, Bavarian cream, to the fruit, cheese, coffee, and cognac—would be to debase that dinner from the plane of the sublime to the plane of the commonplace. It was a fluent melody, sweetly played in tune—piano, crescendo, forte, diminuendo, finale—to which the wines contributed an harmonious counterpoint—though Mrs. Ormizon would only let me open the claret and the Rhine wine, whereas her original project had included sherry and champagne besides. But my poor pen falters. To appreciate the repast in question, one must have eaten it. It carried life to the body, cheer to the soul, while it imbued the mind with a high and serene optimism. It was, moreover, a monument to the genius and energy of my practical little wife. If Dr. Marsac had kept his appointment, he would have been compelled to swallow his doubts along with his oysters. But

What are words said for
At all about it,
If he it was made for
Could do without it?

The miscreant failed us. And Denise's exhibition of her practical abilities was made in vain.

Miss Gluck and I, however, did it full justice. We mellowed, we expanded, we succumbed completely to its fascination ; and even Denise cheered

up a little by and by. We made no secret of our enthusiasm, and that of course pleased her. Then, anyhow, beatitude is infectious ; and she wouldn't have been human if she had remained entirely wretched.

We took for granted, with unquestioning confidence, that the first post next morning would bring us a letter of explanation from the delinquents. When the first post came and went, and did nothing of the kind—well, we could scarcely believe our senses. We looked each other in the face with dull, astonished eyes. This, we agreed, was unaccountable. It passed understanding. Unless they were all of them dead, no excuse could be conceived for such barbaric rudeness. We were prepared to be very charitable, but the charity of a saint could not have withstood a shock like this.

“Well, I declare !” said Dr. Gluck.

“The next time we go out of our way to please those people, I guess they'll know it,” said I.

“Something very serious must certainly be the matter,” said Denise. “I think that you, Stephen, had better go and call upon them, and find out.”

“Well, I must say,” I expostulated, “that's a charming fancy. I lost a whole day's work yester-

day on their account, and now you propose, in cold blood, that I should lose another. You know, if I go out in the morning, my repose of mind is quite upset, and I can't do any work to speak of when I come back. No, thank you, ma'am. Little as you may realize it, my work is of some slight consequence to this family's welfare. Besides, it's their place to communicate with us. Why, they've violated the primary canons of good breeding. In common dignity we can't make the first move."

"Well, *I* can not go," Denise said, "for I've arranged to have a dressmaker here all day, and I can not leave her. She will need me to oversee her work, and to try on my gown."

Dr. Gluck, always fertile in expedients, suggested: "You might send a note by a messenger."

"No," I returned, putting down my foot, "I go back to the ground of our dignity. The first advance must come from them. They've treated us with the utmost discourtesy. I never in my life heard of anything worse. It's for them now to volunteer their apologies, not for us to seek them."

"But, suppose they are ill," Denise feebly submitted.

"It's not probable that they're all three ill at once," the irate head of the family retorted. "And

unless they're all of them in the very article of death, they could manage to get us word. . . . Hello ! " I cried, " Listen to this. This looks as though they were ill, don't it ? "

I had picked up the morning paper, and in glancing over it my eye had been caught by a paragraph which I now proceeded to read aloud. It proclaimed to the world that, on the previous evening, the *Cercle de St. Denis*—" an association composed of the wealthiest Frenchmen resident in New York "—had given a dinner at Delmonico's, " in honor of the distinguished physician, Dr. Hippolyte Marsac, of the Institute, and his wife and daughter, who are at present sojourning in this city. . . . In reply to the reporter's inquiry, What he thought of America ? the doctor said—" etc., etc.

" There ! " I concluded. " That's their excuse for giving us the go-by ? There's a specimen of French politeness for you. How do you like that, Mrs. Ormizon ? "

" Oh, it is dreadful, dreadful," poor little Denise confessed.

" It's perfectly outrageous," Dr. Gluck declared energetically.

And therewith the debate ended. The day passed. Feeling that we had been wantonly in-

jured and insulted, and nursing a resentment deep and bitter, we did not go near the Marsacs ; and never a line came from them. At half-past six in the evening dinner was announced, and we sat down to the funeral baked meats.

It was a forlorn-looking table, a scene of ruin and devastation. At one end, stark upon a platter, lay a cold canvas-back duck. At the opposite end, the wreck of a filet of beef, warmed over, bore melancholy witness to the glory of a vanished day. Some cold sweetbread patties occupied a plate in front of Dr. Gluck. The only novelty was a dish of mashed potatoes. Yesterday's flowers hung their heads with an air of sheepish dejection. So shame-faced, so disreputable, so *katzenjämmerisch*, was their appearance, you couldn't avoid the fancy that they had been on an uproarious spree the night before. The centerpiece of fruit, with great gaps in it here and there, looked as if it had passed through a bombardment. As a whole, the table was at once a tragic and a comic sight. We were cracking jokes at its expense, and laughing over it, when the door-bell rang.

"Who can that be?" questioned Denise.

"Oh, nobody, at this hour," answered I. "Probably a letter."

"You'd better close the doors into the parlor," she suggested.

"Nonsense," I said, glancing at my watch. "You don't suppose anybody's going to call at ten minutes before seven."

So the folding-doors that connect the two rooms remained wide open. Next instant—conceive our sensations if you can—next instant, gazing through those open folding-doors, we saw enter the parlor from the hallway—Dr. Marsac, followed by his wife and daughter! Clad in full evening costume, correct, smiling, complacent, they had evidently come to dine with us. Horror of horrors! they had mistaken the day.

Denise gave a shriek. I sprang upon my feet and bounded forward. Dr. Gluck began to giggle. Next thing I knew, Dr. Marsac had seized hold of one of Denise's hands and one of mine, and was covering us with his effusive French greetings, while madame and mademoiselle simpered in the background.

"Ah, *mon cher*! Ah, Denise! Here we are, you see. *Mais, tenez*, how you are well placed here! An interior completely charming! *N'est ce pas*, Hortense? *N'est ce pas*, Marie? And this Denise, my faith, she becomes from more to more young, from more to more beautiful, from day to

day. Ah, my good Ormizon, how you are happy to possess such a wife! *Allons*, you permit me to embrace her, is it not? *Mais comment donc!* She weeps."

It was true. Denise had begun to cry. The Doctor started back in dismay, and looked to me for an explanation. But the situation was beyond me. I was nonplused. I had lost my wits. I knew not what to do or say.

"Oh, why—why—do you stand there like that?" sobbed Denise. "Why don't you tell him? Tell him—*tell him!*"

"Well, Doctor," I began, "the fact is, there's a mistake. You see, it was *last* night that you were to have done us the honor of dining here, not to-night; and the result is, you comprehend, that we are not perfectly prepared. We—"

"*Miséricorde!*" cried the Doctor, confusion and consternation mantling his purple face. "Is it possible that we have committed a blunder so terrible as that? Hortense," sternly addressing his wife, "how does this happen?"

For reply, Hortense, without speaking, plunged her hand into her pocket, whence she presently drew it forth, holding a letter. The letter she opened, and passed to her husband—pointing to a certain line. He took it and read; and as he

read, first relief, then joy, then infinite amusement, broke like sunshine over his brow. Shaking with laughter, "Ah, that excellent Denise," he exclaimed, "read what she has written."

He gave me the letter. I read. Denise had written Tuesday, January the 24th, and then she had gone to work and got up her dinner for Monday, January the 23d!

"Ah! my sweet Denise," remarked the Doctor, as he devoured a slice of the cold canvas-back, "it is as I have always said: you are good, you are beautiful, you are full of wit; but practical—alas! my Denise—no, not exactly."

THE END.





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